monuments of NORTHERN NEPAL

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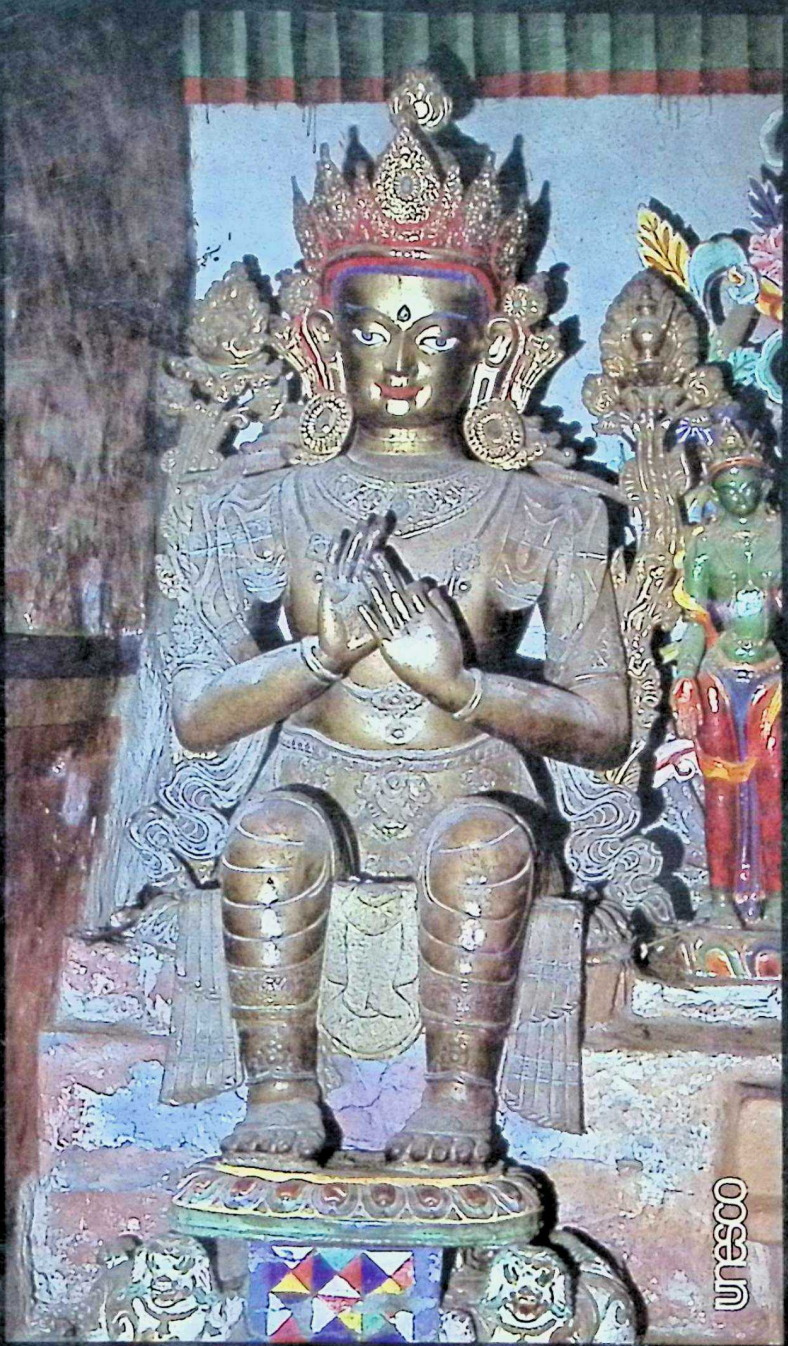

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Monuments of northern Nepal

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Monuments of northern Nepal

Corneille Jest

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On cover:
Kutsapternga.
Statue of Maitreya.

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Preface

The Buddhist and Hindu monasteries, temples and shrines found in the northern region of the Kingdom of Nepal are difficult of access and little known. In this region, religious beliefs, mainly Buddhist, are still strong, and religious practices are closely mingled with the everyday life of the inhabitants. Nepal, one of the active centres of Buddhist culture, possesses a heritage whose influence extends far beyond the borders of this small country.

The author of this book, Corneille Jest, is a leading ethnologist in Nepalese studies and head of the Co-ordinated Research Group for the Programme of Himalayan-Karakorum Studies at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) of France. His meticulous, well-documented analysis is the result of work carried out in the field, in contact with the communities concerned. It gives the general reader an interesting insight into a little-known part of the world.

This book is one of a series designed to make better known Nepalese culture and tradition as well as to help the government to raise funds for the preservation of the Nepalese people's cultural heritage. Unesco is helping in this effort. If the reader wishes he may send contributions to: International Trust Fund for the Preservation of Sites and Monuments in Kathmandu Valley, Unesco, 7 place de Fontenoy, 75700 Paris, France.

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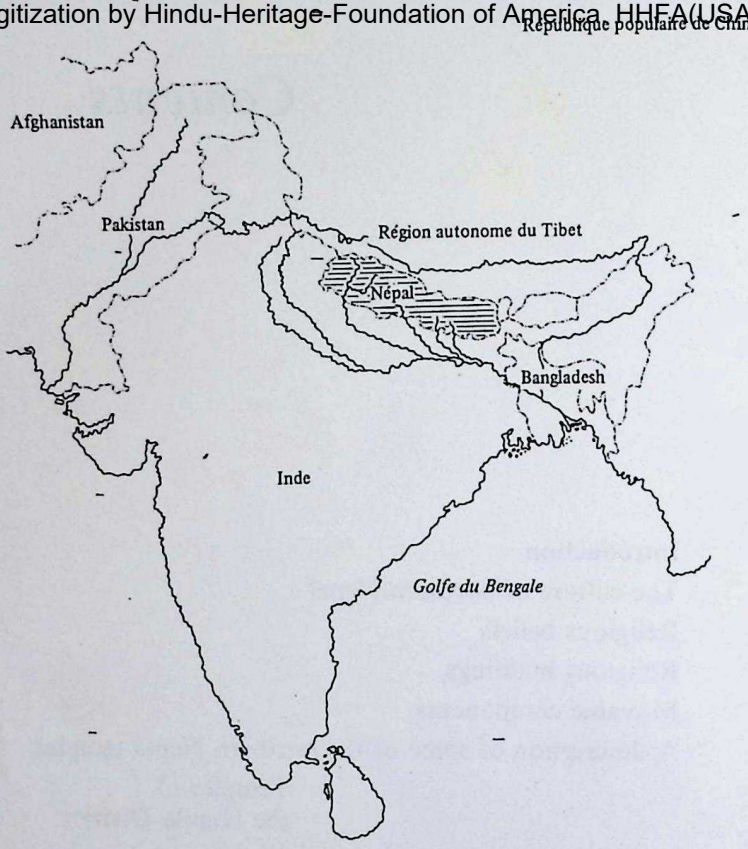

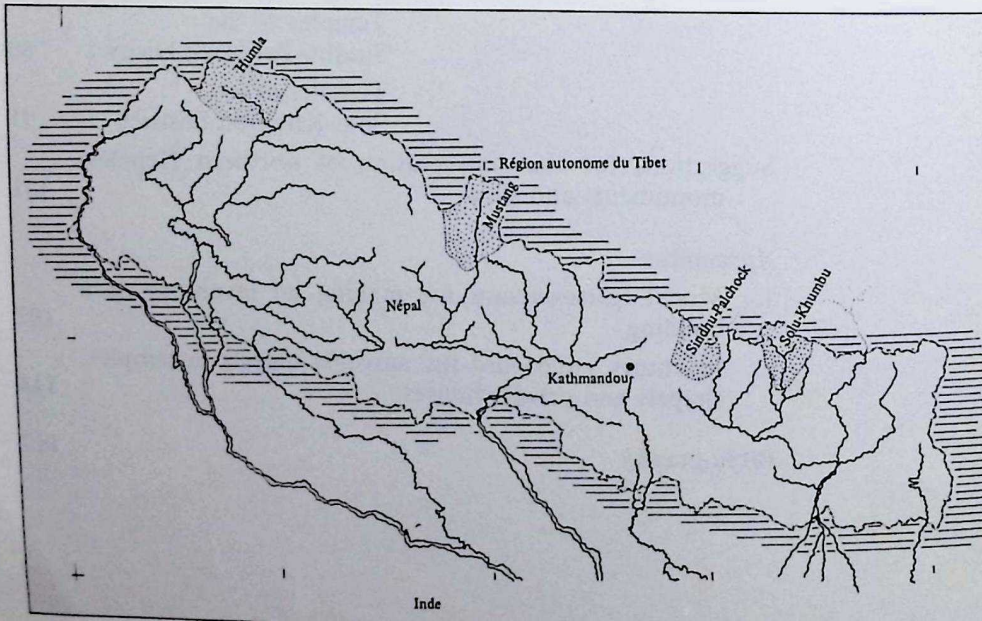

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Introduction

Fig. 1. Nepal and neighbouring territories.

Today Nepal's cultural heritage has become of widespread interest and is the object of extensive operations both on the part of the Nepalese Government and of Unesco.

That this remote country, isolated between China and India and open to the Western world only as recently as 1951, should have so quickly become aware of the wealth of its cultural heritage is indeed remarkable.

A systematic inventory of the monuments of the Kathmandu Valley has already been undertaken by Unesco.[1] What then could be more normal for the Nepalese Government than to contemplate a similar enterprise with regard to an inventory of the monuments of northern Nepal, this contact zone of two great civilizations? With this in view, a preparatory study of the region was suggested in 1978.

First and foremost this involved a preliminary survey of the district, covering an area extending over some 800 km, access to which was rendered practically impossible owing to its altitude and the lack of means of communication.

This study should therefore be looked upon as a step towards an exhaustive survey of the monuments of northern Nepal drawing attention to the diversity of styles which, though originating from common patterns, are due to differences in ecological and cultural environments.

These monuments are mostly related to the Buddhist religion, but a few Hindu sanctuaries in pilgrimage centres have also been described.

Without the experience of a previous long contact with the

1. Cf. *Masterplan for the Conservation of the Cultural Heritage in the Kathmandu Valley*, Paris, Unesco, 1977.

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peoples of Tibetan culture and their language, this study could never have been prepared. The knowledge acquired during years of study and the everyday use of the Tibetan language enabled us to define the socio-religious problems underlying the technical problems of these people and their environment in an atmosphere of mutual understanding.

It was not our intention nor were we qualified to undertake the study of the building structures. The present study therefore will have to be completed by a thorough analysis based on the architectural and technical findings.

Owing to the short time available for the survey it was soon deemed impossible to cover the whole of northern Nepal. After a preparatory period in Kathmandu, we went successively to the Mustang District in April-May 1978 and in December 1978; the Sindhu-Palchock and Dolakha District in October 1978; the Humla District in November-December 1978.

Moreover, in January 1979 we organized in the Archaeological Department a temporary exhibition on the Cultural Heritage of Nepal to show the first results of our endeavours to the members of the 'Lama Desh Darsan' Seminar, grouping about eighty members of the clergy and village chiefs of northern Nepal.

Since the survey was to cover more than 30,000 km² in the difficultly accessible upper valleys, it was essential to draw up a detailed work schedule.

A team, comprising a surveyor and a photographer, was formed and a research plan, including a questionnaire, was drawn up. The following tasks were to be carried out: (a) an exhaustive graphic survey; (b) a description of the sites and their present condition; (c) a series of photographs; (d) a log-book of all the historical, ethnographical and technical data collected.

Contacts were established first of all with the chief and members of the Panchayat[1] and the responsible members of the clergy. Separate reports were made on each field mission and all data and photographic documentation were deposited with the Archaeological Department of Nepal. The classification of the documentation has been planned in such a way that each of its components may be supplemented.

In order to record the state of the religious buildings, two field missions, the first in the Sindhu-Palchock (Helambu) District in 1976 and the second in the Solu-Khumbu District in 1977, had already been carried out. In the course of these missions a standard survey model for future inventories was perfected.

1. An administrative area equivalent to an important village or a group of villages.

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The bibliography (see page 117) and a research plan for iconographic documents appearing in ancient works have been of great value as comparative materials.

We should like to express our thanks to all the responsible authorities who assisted us in our task, and more especially to Mr P. S. Rana, former Minister of Education in the Nepalese Government; Mr R. J. Thapa, Director General of the Department of Archaeology, and his two assistants, Mr J. L. Sharma and Mr P. H. Vajracharya; the members of the Department's technical team, and more especially Mr T. R. Tamrakar, photographer, and Mr V. Ranjit, topographer. Mr Tamla Ukyab, Under Secretary, Home and Panchayat Ministry, Kusho Tsechu, monk in charge of the annual Lama Desh Darsan Seminar, and Mr A. Kunzang Phenbo, Buddhist temple builder, gave us useful information about Himalayan traditions.

We also wish to thank Dr Grace Morley, Advisor in the ICOM Agency for Asia, whose constant help and experience have been invaluable, and John Sanday, architect and Unesco consultant, closely associated with our work through his monograph *Building Conservation in Nepal,* Paris, Unesco, 1978, in which he has described some of the characteristic aspects of northern Nepal.

Finally, we wish to state that this study could never have been successfully completed without the valuable co-operation of the local authorities and the people of the upper valleys of Nepal.

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The culture of northern Nepal

Nepal occupies a unique position between India and China. It covers an area of 140,000 km² extending over 800 km along the southern slope of the high Himalayan range. Going north one travels through three very different regions: the Terai plain, the middle mountains of Nepal separated from the plain by the Mahabharat range, and finally the high mountain range which rises abruptly with its soaring peaks, the highest in the world.

The population exceeds 12,000,000 inhabitants.

The people and ways of life

The regions to the north where the cultural heritage has been studied are situated along the Upper Himalayan Range between 28°-30° latitude North and 81°-88° longitude East.

Although these regions are difficult of access, they have been the contact zone between India and central Asia.

It is not our intention here to give a historical analysis of the cultures of this zone. Nevertheless a brief summary may be of use in order to have a better understanding of the problems involved, and to answer the various questions that arise concerning the great wave of development that has overtaken the Himalayan region of Nepal.

The people living in Nepal's central valleys look either towards the Kathmandu Valley or to the south and they speak, or at least understand, Nepali, but the people living in the regions at the foot of the high range and the upper valleys are of Tibetan mother tongue and culture and are known as *Bhotya* (the Nepalese

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use this term, meaning inhabitant of Tibet, for people who dress and live like Tibetans although they are now citizens of Nepal).[1]

The anthropological features of these people, their behaviour and techniques, are much the same as those of the Tibetans. Moreover their economy is largely dependent upon trade with the Chinese Autonomous Region of Tibet. Consequently, these Nepali citizens, members of a Hindu kingdom to which they belong administratively, are culturally linked to their northern neighbours and are Buddhists.

Owing to their geographical situation, they control the lines of communication between the Chinese province and Nepal. According to tradition, there are thirteen passes which cross the high mountain ridge of the Himalayas or follow the courses of the rivers whose sources rise in Tibet. These are all commercial thoroughfares and axes of cultural penetration.

In the northern regions with which this study is concerned live 80,000 people who represent a variety of small ethnic groups that have immigrated over the years from various regions in Tibet. These groups live in areas shut off by rivers or rugged terrain. Characteristics common to these groups may be accounted for either by their environment or by the fact that they belong to the Tibetan cultural area.

The high altitude, cold climate and low rainfall north of the upper range permit marginal agriculture only: wheat, barley, buckwheat and very recently potatoes. The breeding of yaks, sheep and goats provides food and raw materials for weaving. The farming and grazing resources, however, have proved insufficient since these groups settled in the upper valleys, and they are supplemented by the barter of locally grown grain for rock salt from the salt lakes of the upper Tibetan plateau.

Shortly after the spring planting, the herds are taken to pasture in the high mountains; during the summer trading in grain and salt takes place in the Autonomous Region of Tibet. In the autumn after the harvest part of the population leaves for the central valleys to sell their wares, such as textiles and medicinal herbs.

The houses of these people are two or three storeys high, solidly built to weather the extreme temperatures. The stables and storerooms are on the ground floor with the living quarters above.

Men and women are dressed in the Tibetan style and in winter

1. The terms Tibet and Tibetan, as used in this study, have no political implications but serve to describe a people, a language, a culture of an area of civilization which includes, among others, the Tibetan Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China.

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wear long sheepskin-lined coats. The women, who are more conservative than the men, wear jewels and headdresses which distinguish them from the peoples of the other regions.

The Bhotya groups are divided into exogamic clans, a general rule that is always strictly observed. These clans are divided into distinctive hierarchical strata as follows: the aristocracy and the hereditary clergy; the common people; farmers and nomad shepherds; corporations of workers considered unclean: butchers, ironsmiths, potters, etc. These strata are endogamous and correspond to a division of work based on class.

Until the introduction of the recent Nepalese constitution, local authority was in the hands of hereditary chiefs who were aided by a village assembly responsible for the administration of the community.

Religious life, which is exclusively Buddhist, developed in the Tibetan manner. The people of the high valleys, who had either come from or been influenced by Tibet, have successively received the teachings of the Sakya-pa, the Drug-pa and the Nying-ma-pa orders, this last being the most important.

The organization of religious life in these orders is to a considerable extent the same everywhere. Time is measured by a lunar calendar (with the insertion of an intercalary month every three years). The New Year, or Lo-sar (*lo-gsar*),[1] falls in mid-February and is associated with the eviction of evil. Midsummer is marked by fertility and prosperity ceremonies for the soil and the herds. There are many places of worship: village temples, private chapels, and monasteries for men and for women.

Monastic life, which had existed in the upper valleys of Nepal but then declined, has reappeared in the last three or four generations, particularly in the region of Solu-Khumbu.

Cultural and linguistic groups

These briefly described characteristic traits are a common denominator, but the different groups have their own particularities which it is necessary to recognize.

The different Tibetan cultural and language groups which exist from west to east are listed below:

1. A simplified phonetic transcription has been used to render common Tibetan terms. However, certain words of a religious nature (in brackets) have been given a more exact transliteration in Roman letters for the purposes of comparative studies.

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Nepalese District	*Local name*	*Classical Tibetan name*
Darchula	Tingkar	Tiṅg-Dkar
Humla	Limirong	Li-Mi Roṅg
Humla	Nying	
Mugu	Mugum	Mu-Gum
Dolpa	Dolpo	Dol-Po
Mustang	Lo	Glo
Mustang	Baragaon	
Manang	Nyi-Shang	Snyi-Shang
Manang	Nar	Snar
Manang	Gyasumdo (Tingaon)	Rgya-sum-Mdo
Gorkha	Nub-Ri	Nub-Ri
Gorkha	Tsum	Tsum
Rasuwa	Langthang	Glang-Thang
Sindhu Palchock	Helambu/Yolmo	Yol-Mo
Dolakha	Rolwaling	Rol-Ba-Gling
Solu Khumbu	Khumbu	
Sankhusaba	Shingsa	Zhing-Sa
Taplejung	Wallung	Ha-Lung

At the extreme western tip of Nepal, the Byanśi, who live in the Darchula district, are a long-established group only slightly influenced by Buddhism. On the other hand, the inhabitants of the Humla, Mugu and principally the Dolpo districts have preserved a number of Tibetan traditions that have now disappeared in their country of origin.

For instance, in the eleventh century Dolpo was a part of the western principalities of Tibet, then of the Jumla kingdom, before it became an integral part of Nepal after the latter's unification by Prithivi-Narayan at the end of the eighteenth century.

The Mustang district (Glo in Tibetan), which was formerly a Tibetan principality, retained until very recently its own political and religious institutions.

To this population of Tibetan origin one should also add the Thakali (some 10,000) who, first assimilated to the Bhotya, are now turning towards Hinduism, the religion of the economically and politically powerful castes.

The people settled between the Kali Gandaki and the Buri Gandaki (Manang and Gorkha) are likewise distinctive. In north-east Nepal the best known is the Sherpa group (literally 'men from the East'). Even before the opening up of Nepal to the Western world, the Sherpas were already auxiliaries to mountain expeditions. This ethnic group, which came from eastern Tibet, first settled in the high valleys of the Dudh Kosi and then spread into the neighbouring regions.

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Religious beliefs

Nepal has come under two influences: Hinduism, which spread from India along the middle valleys, and Buddhism. In northern Nepal, inhabited by Tibetan-speaking people, Buddhism is the predominant religion. Here it is an esoteric development of Buddhist doctrine, incorporating elements of local beliefs and elaborate ritual, and is influenced by a tantric development of Hinduism. This religion has spread. to central Asia, China, Mongolia and the high valleys of the Himalayas in Nepal and Bhutan.

The 'pre-Buddhist' beliefs, the dialectical term for which is *Bon*, are still present in the intercessor's (shaman) ritual. *Bon* also designates a religious sect representative of the continuity of both pre-Buddhist beliefs and religious practices close to Buddhism. It differs from the latter by the inversion of the divine attributes and of names of divinities, and by the direction of the circumambulation around sanctuaries. Bon-po are few in Nepal and they live mostly in the higher regions of the Kali Gandaki, Mustang (Luprag) and Dolpo. It is in the centres of pilgrimage that both Buddhism and Hinduism have kept alive their ancient traditions. Initial beliefs were centred on mountain worship: a mountain ancestor identified with the founder of an ethnic group or with a line of descendants corresponding to a given region. These mountains belong to a sacred geography assimilated by Buddhism and, to a lesser extent, by Hinduism. The legend of Padmasambhava refers principally to the metamorphosis of ancient mountain and lake divinities into defenders of the new faith, and he is said to have visited every region of Nepal.

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Buddhism

Buddhism has strongly impregnated the social structures of the people of northern Nepal.

It developed in Tibet over a period of more than thirteen centuries and spread to Bhutan, Ladakh and Mongolia. Although of different origins, it has merged into a homogeneous whole. Variations between orders or schools have been conditioned by politics or a struggle for power far more than by differences in doctrine. The fundamental beliefs of these orders are similar but they vary in ritual and liturgical traditions. The basic writings considered as being the revelations of Buddha, the *Kanjur* (*bka'-'gyur*) and its commentaries *Tenjur* (*bstan-'gyur*) are the reference texts of all the orders, although each has in addition its own extra-canonical and literary texts.

The most important orders are the following: Nying-ma-pa (*rnying-ma-pa*), 'the ancient order', Sa-kya-pa (*sa-skya-pa*) 'from the Sakya monastery founded in the eleventh century', Ka-gyü-pa (*bka-rgyud-pa*) 'the order of teachings transmitted orally' and the Ge-luk-pa (*dge-lugs-pa*).[1]

It is said that the origin of the Nying-ma-pa goes back to the teachings of Padmasambhava, or Guru Rinpoche, who in the eighth century actively propagated Buddhism in Tibet and consecrated the Samyä temple. This is the most important order in northern Nepal.

The Ka-gyü-pa order, which is also present in Nepal, stems from the teachings of Marpa (1012-97).

Fig. 2.
Nying-ma-pa lamas of Dolpo performing a fire oblation ceremony *(sbyin-sreg)*.

The clergy: their functions

The priests, or lamas (*bla-ma*), which simply means teachers, play a determining role. They are man's indispensable guides, without whose assistance there is no hope of salvation. If they do not all attain the stage of spiritual guide, at least they make the liturgy and the magic rites understandable to the layman. This structure and its ramifications constitute a powerful clerical hierarchy which, although externalized in complex rites and rigid formalism, inspires a highly spiritual life and produces great mystics.

1. The Ge-luk-pa order represents the culmination of a slow revision process begun in the thirteenth century, when there was a return to the sources of Buddhist doctrine.

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The priest has manifold functions. As a contemplative, he seeks union with the divinities invoked in the rituals; he relies on his knowledge and religious experience to help the members of the community; he is an educator who teaches Tibetan, the language of the religion; he can also be an artist, a physician or an astrologer.

In the Nying-ma-pa order, the clergy, who are all members of the upper class, are allowed to marry and their functions are often both social and religious.

How does one become a member of the clergy? At the age of 12, a boy, taught by a priest, learns to read and write. Later he will conduct the religious services of the regular collective ritual (ceremonies in the village temple on certain dates) and the individual ritual (rites of the life-cycle) and ancestor worship, as well as soothsaying and exorcising.

The religious institution is supported by compulsory contributions from each household and by individual donations.

The monastic system, which flourished in certain regions (Dolpo) four or five centuries ago, has experienced a renewal due to the influence of certain Tibetan and Bhutanese lamas (end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries).

The clergy constitute an assembly, trasang (*grva-chaṅg*), at the head of which is an abbot, khenpo (*mkhan-po*). The head of the community is assisted by two custodians, nyerwa (*gner-pa*), who collect gifts and administer the monastery estates. Usually the teacher, lopön (*slob-dpon*), responsible for the instruction has attained the highest degree of initiation, geshe (*dge-bshes*).

The religious community spends part of the year in meditation without leaving the monastery; at other times their activities are devoted to reading liturgical texts or to purification rites performed at the request of the faithful.

Participation of the village communities in religious life

This participation is intense, since many of the community members are priests in charge of the ritual. Laymen are indispensable, since it is their duty to support the religious community materially and contribute to the ceremonies by gifts in kind throughout the year. A secretary is chosen from the community and keeps the accounts of these gifts and donations.

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Role of the clergy

Over the centuries, some priests have worked for the renewal of the Buddhist faith; intellectually gifted, they have preached the doctrine and performed praiseworthy acts such as the restoration or construction of sanctuaries.

In recent times, two of the most famous contributors to this renaissance were Shang Rinpoche, a native of central Tibet, who for two decades (1940-59) travelled through north-west Nepal, Dolpo, Mustang and Manang rebuilding temples and sanctuaries. Lama Sherab Dorje (1884-1945), who was born in Bhutan, participated in the restoration of the Swayambhu site in the Kathmandu Valley and then built a number of monasteries and temples in northern Nepal.

Buddhist ritual and calendar of socio-religious activities

In the Buddhism of these regions, the practice of rites is of foremost importance.

The word 'rite' signifies the means by which one may attain a given goal, i.e. attain the state of Vajradhara, a condition allowing one to work for the welfare of all human beings. The success of this accomplishment depends on freely accepted purification and the accumulation of merits.

Through his meritorious acts, the layman escapes from the cycle of reincarnation. For this reason he participates in the building of religious monuments, the periodic ceremonies and the fashioning of ritual objects.

On set dates specified in the Tibetan lunar calendar, the priests assemble to celebrate a ritual involving the whole community. To the laymen falls the task of collecting and preparing the food for all who participate (barley flour and raisins for the sacrificial cakes).

In the monasteries the ritual is strictly defined, as are the prayers and the regulation of the ceremonies. Each order has its own festival calendar. However, a certain number of days (the tenth, fifteenth and last day of the lunar month) are days of common prayer for everyone.

Following is the calendar of the Tengboche (Khumbu) monastery, Nying-ma-pa order, Mindroling (*Smiń-gro-gliń*) rule:

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Calendar of religious activities (Tengboche Monastery) [1]

Western calendar	*Tibetan calendar*	*Ritual*	*Participation of the members of the community*
Mid-February to mid-March	1st lunar month 1st-4th day 5th-10th day 10th day	New Year *lo-gsar* *tshe-grub* *tshe-dbang*	All the inhabitants
Mid-March to mid-April	2nd lunar month	Meditation	
Mid-April to mid-May	3rd lunar month		
Mid-May to mid-June	4th lunar month 7th to 15th day 15th day	Collective fasting, *smyung-gnas* Anniversary of the death of Buddha	Inhabitants and benefactors
Mid-June to mid-July	5th lunar month 10th day	Anniversary of the birth of Padmasambhava	
Mid-July to mid-August	6th lunar month 4th day	Anniversary of the birth of Buddha	
Mid-August to mid-September	7th lunar month 1st-10th day	Ceremony, ritual of *rDo-rje Sems-pa*	
Mid-September to mid-October	8th lunar month		
Mid-October to mid-November	9th lunar month 29th day	*ma-ni ril-grub*	All the inhabitants
Mid-November to mid-December	10th lunar month until the 17th day	*ma-ni ril-grub*	All the inhabitants
Mid-December to mid-January	11th lunar month		
Mid-January to mid-February	12th lunar month		

1. The Tibetan calendar is used in the regions of Tibetan culture and language in Nepal (the districts to the north, including the Sherpa, the Tamang and the Gurung groups).

As in China and Japan, the years are reckoned according to a 60-year cycle combining the 12 animals: the mouse, ox, tiger, hare, dragon, serpent, horse, sheep, monkey, bird, dog and pig; the five elements: wood, fire, earth, iron and water, each divided into male and female (ten signs).

The years are divided into 12 months of 30 days each (360 days) which are numbered from 1 to 12.

In order to adjust this theoretical lunar calendar to the real lunar calendar (354 days), a certain number of days have been left out. To make it

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Hindu calendar (Main festivals)

The main festivals of the Hindu religious calendar observed by the inhabitants of the central valleys of Nepal are listed below. The places of pilgrimage are all situated in the mountains of northern Nepal.

Western calendar	*Nepalese calendar*	*Divinity*	*Place of worship*	*Main pilgrimage*
Mid-April to mid-May (*Purni:* full moon)	Baisakh	Bagvati, Devi	In every village	
Mid-May mid-June (*Purni*)	Jeth	Goth puja	Bahun in the village	
Mid-June mid-July	Asar	—		
Mid-July mid-August (*Purni*)	Saun	Festival of the snakes (*Nag Pancami*)	In every village	
Mid-August mid-September (*Ansi:* new moon)	Bhadau	Mahadev (Kusi Ansi)	In every village	Gosainkund Bhairav kund Bhairung kund Kalingchok
Mid-September mid-October (*Purni*) (*Ansi*)	Asoj	Shiva (Dasain) (Tiwar)	In every village In every village	
Mid-October mid-November (*Ansi*)	Kartik	Mahadev		Pashupati Halasi, Dumja Beni
Mid-November mid-December (*Purni*)	Munsir	Devi	In every village	Daneswar
Mid-December mid-January (*Purni*)	Pus	Mahadev	In every village	Sailung
Mid-January mid-February (*Sankantri:* 1st day)	Magh	Mahadev	In every village	
Mid-February mid-March (*Purni*)	Phagun	(Holi)	In every village	
Mid-March mid-April (*Purni*) eight day after (*Purni*) (*Ansi*)	Cait	(Cait Dasain) (Matathirta)	In every village In every village	

coincide with the solar calendar (365¼ days), an intercalary month is added every 3 years.

The lunar New Year, the so-called 'Peasants' New Year', falls on the closest possible date to the winter solstice (around mid-January of the Western calendar), whereas the official New Year, 'the King's New Year', comes about a month later.

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Importance of Kathmandu: pre-eminence as a pilgrimage centre

Kathmandu Valley, called 'Nepal' by the northern populations, is the site of the most important pilgrimage for the Nepalese. During the winter, all the peoples referred to in this study meet in Kathmandu to visit the Buddhist pilgrimage centres. Kathmandu is in fact one of the four most important pilgrimages for all Buddhists, and the best time to go there is in the Year of the Bird, Chalo (*bya-lo*) in the Tibetan cycle. Bodhnāth and the Katashimbu district of Kathmandu are favourite places in which to stay. Around the Bodhnāth stupa the pilgrims exchange the wares brought from their far-away valleys, fabrics, textiles and medicinal plants, for manufactured articles. Here they also buy ritual objects.

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Religious buildings

An examination should now be made of the numerous buildings in the Buddhist world, representations of the 'spiritual body' of Buddha (just as images represent his 'physical body' and books his 'speech'), as well as of the relationships established between man and what he has constructed. The Himalayan people have elaborated an architecture that is deeply rooted in Buddhist philosophy and at the same time extraordinarily integrated in the natural environment.

Standards of building according to the Buddhist ritual

We asked Amchi Kunzang, an architect who has drawn up the plans for more than a hundred temples, to provide us with the building rules that should be observed. They are found in various religious texts such as the *Tenjur*, Volume *Ga* and the *Richenterdzö* (*rin-chen gter-mdzod*), a canonic work of the Nying-ma-pa order.

The temple of Samyä in Tibet, which was built in the eighth century by Padmasambhava, is the prototype that has been chosen.

The ground plan of a temple is square, its determining characteristics depend on the size of the supporting framework, and its typology is a function of the number of pillars.

The simplest type of building is rectangular; the main hall is square and the roof is supported by four pillars, literally ka-shi-dung-gye (*ka-bzhi gdung-brgyad*), 'the four pillars and eight beams'.

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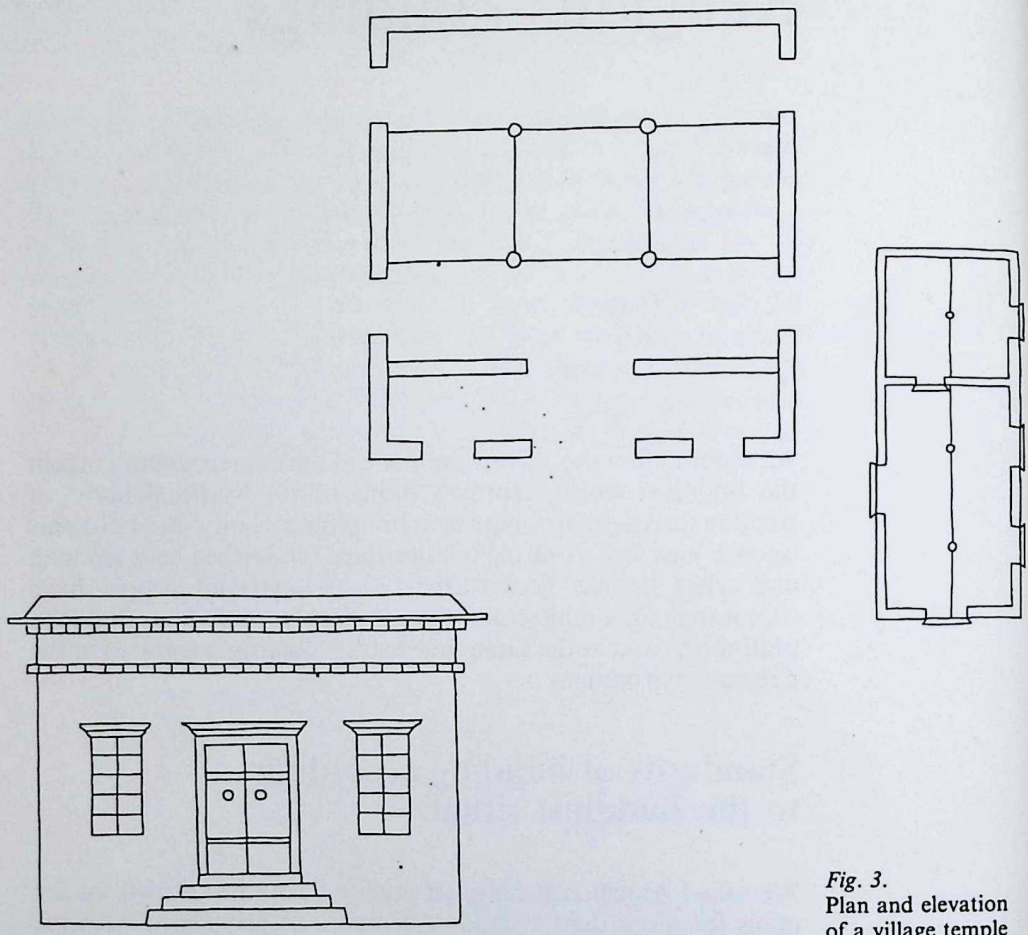

Fig. 3.
Plan and elevation of a village temple with four supporting pillars (by A. Kunzang).

The number four, which is related to the square, is part of a classification widely used in Tibet; for example, it establishes a relationship between a structure and the lineage of followers. A given lama will have a certain number of disciples, the four most important being the four pillars, then the eight beams, the sixteen joists, and the thirty-two small joists.

Larger buildings with six pillars are called Khadrug dunggu (*ka-drug-gdung-dgu*) ('the six pillars and the nine beams'). The two pillars nearest the altar are sometimes higher and support a second storey which leans against the wall opposite the entrance. This type of temple is known as Pho-thog mo-thog (*pho-thog mo-thog*).

The great temples consist of ten pillars in two rows; the four in the middle are higher and support a lantern tower, sin-gi-gyab.

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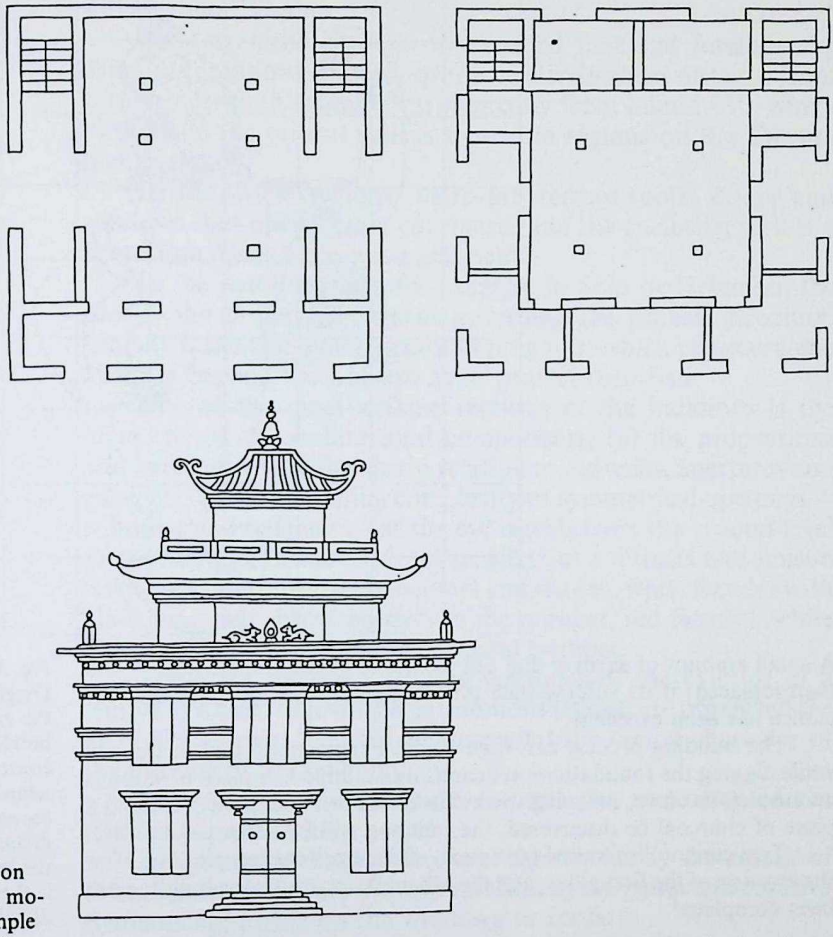

Fig. 4.
Plan and elevation of the Pho-thog mo-thog type of temple (by A. Kunzang).

When the decision has been taken to build a temple, whether by a donor or a community, the site is chosen with great care. Whenever possible, the main façade should look east, 'the great white way leading to the rising sun'. On the south, the site will be bounded by a river, identified with the 'turquoise dragon'. On the west, the back of the temple should be set against a mountain, corresponding to 'a red bird'. To the north, another mountain with the shape of a turtle will enclose the sacred precinct.

The choice of this site will be confirmed by casting dice or by divination dedicated to the divinity Palden Lhamo (*dpal-ldan lha-mo*).

Once all these conditions have been satisfactorily met, a square is traced on the soil of the selected site by a grid composed of 9 × 9 compartments on which is traced the figure of an earth divinity (*sa-bdag*).

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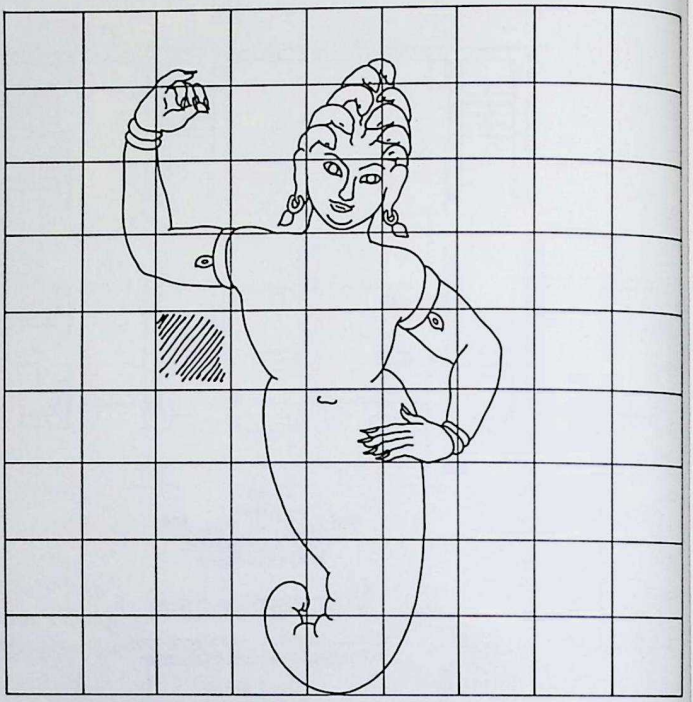

Fig. 5.
Diagram traced on the ground of building site before construction of the temple. The image represents the divinity *Sa-bdag*; the hatched square is the spot where the digging first begins.

A small amount of earth is dug out from one of the compartments and then replaced; if its volume then proves greater, this indicates that the choice has been excellent.

The building process can then begin. Fragments found in the soil while digging the foundations are carefully examined. A piece of wood is an auspicious omen, meaning the building will last a long time. Should a piece of charcoal be discovered, the building will be destroyed by fire.

Two ceremonies, rabnè (*rab-gnas*), consecrate the temple: one after the erection of the first pillar, and the other after work on the building has been completed.

Typology of religious buildings

Monuments in northern Nepal are usually Buddhist, although there are a few Hindu monuments, mostly to be found at pilgrimage sites (Muktināth, Gosainkund). These structures have been designed to withstand the rigorous climatic conditions: monsoon rains on the southern slopes, cold or drought on the northern slopes of the high Himalayan range.

In contrast with the buildings of Kathmandu Valley, the

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façades are austere. Studied elegance and profusion of ornaments will be found inside.

Building techniques are determined first and foremost by climatic conditions. Indeed, over a relatively short distance from south to north the climate varies greatly from humid with heavy rainfalls in the central valleys to arid in regions on the Tibetan high plateau.

In the driest regions, there are terrace-roofs, doors and windows that open onto a courtyard, and the enclosing wall is a protection against the wind and cold.

In the damp regions, for example in Solu or Helambu, the roof is the protective element governing the general structure. Usually it is a two-sided, gently sloping roof which projects some distance beyond the walls so as to protect their base.

One of the most striking features of the buildings is the hierarchy of the architectural components: (a) the proportions and harmony of the façades in relation to the walls, apertures and parapet; (b) the increasing complexity of symmetrical openings—windows and balconies—as the eye travels from the ground level of the building to the roof; (c) an effect of contrasts and unison linked with the interplay of colours and shades: white façades with black openings, black borders to the parapet, red façades, white ends to the joists and black-bordered parapet.

These are the more striking contrasts of the exterior of a temple in which, following a harmonious layout, are organized the hierarchical areas, concealing somewhat the sacred character of the interior of the building.

The architectural structure respects the symmetry of the relationships of volume.

Religious buildings differ from the secular by the colour of their façades, which are white or red, and by the painted decorative elements appearing on the windows or roofs.

Other structural components are painted in a given colour, undoubtedly for aesthetic reasons, but linked at the same time with available materials and adaptable techniques.

For instance, the window frames outside the casing are often painted black; two types of clay were used formerly, one held the window frames together and the other was used to plaster the walls. Nowadays the first type is conventionally represented by black paint.

In addition to these religious buildings, others used for domestic purposes should be mentioned: houses, dwellings of local chiefs, and grain-mills. Many of them are built for defence and offer protection against the cold and wind or an enemy.

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Fig. 6. Three-storeyed house of a village chief (Dzar, Muktināth valley).

The historical concurrence of events can be illustrated by the different types of construction: large fortified buildings following the spur of a rugged mountain ridge give way to free-standing three-storeyed buildings that overlook a vast closed-in courtyard.

The conception of religious space

A temple or a monastery is not a complete unit in itself; it is part of a whole that has its social purpose and is so regarded by the faithful.

As has already been seen, a building site is not haphazardly chosen: around a site where Padmasambhava fought a demon, for instance, or one where a saintly hermit rested, there is a whole range of religious or historical motivations justifying the choice of the particular location. Very often it will be an exceptional site: a mountain or a terrace overlooking a river. A close-by mountain peak, cliffs or rocks, a lake are then part of a sacred precinct that is

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demarcated by votive structures, prayer walls and masts.

This area is clearly defined, since within a hallowed precinct justice is dispensed by the head of the religious community.

Types of construction

A Buddhist environment is marked by a series of signs, expressions of a deep-seated faith substantiated by concrete representations. They are enumerated here so as to familiarize the reader with both their form and their terminology:

They comprise buildings: monasteries, temples and smaller constructions such as chapels or hermitages; prayer-wheels; prayer-walls; sanctuaries of minor deities; small buildings housing prayer-wheels set in motion by water; engraved religious formulas on rock slabs.

Temples

These buildings fall into five categories:

1. The monastery, gompa (*dgon-pa*), comprises a series of buildings usually grouped around a courtyard. The temple itself occupies one side, the other sides serve as dormitories for the clergy and pilgrims, and as a kitchen.

   In the main building, the temple is on the ground floor; the living quarters of the head of the community and a smaller temple dedicated to the protective deities (*srung-khang*) occupy the first floor.

   The courtyard is used both as a shelter for the pilgrims and members of the community during the major ceremonies and as a stage for the performance of the religious dances that take place once or twice a year:
2. The village temple (*yul-gi-lha-khang*) is built either within the village or near it. It rarely has any buildings annexed to it, though sometimes there may be a kitchen for use during festivals. The caretaker's quarters may be part of the temple itself.
3. The private temple chapel, labrang (*bla-brang*), is a part of a house reserved for worship, and is always on an upper floor.
4. The meeting-house, mitsogpa (*mi-mtshogs-pa*), is in the village or group of houses and is used for assemblies. It retains, however, a religious character as it has a small altar and, often, religious books.

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5. The hermitage, tsamkhang (*mtsham-khang*), is a small house with one or two rooms or it may be a cell hollowed out of the rock. It is an isolated place for meditation. A monk may live there in seclusion for a season or even longer.

Prayer-wheels

The great prayer-wheel, mani dungyur (*mani dung-'phyur*), 'a hundred million *mani*' is a means of expressing faith; it may be integrated into the temple or monastery or placed in an independent building.

The cylinder, which can have a diameter as big as 2 m × 1.60 m, contains printed prayers and stands in a square room, the walls of which are usually covered with paintings of a religious nature.

Votive buildings: chörten

The chörten (*mčhod-rten, stūpa* in Sanscrit), a 'receptacle of offerings', is the most frequently found building. Only a reliquary mound at the beginning, its structures have subsequently been modified; the hemisphere or dome, which initially was the whole monument, has progressively diminished in size, whereas the base has increased in volume.

Stūpas vary in size from the monumental type, such as those of Swayambhu or Bodhnath near Kathmandu, to the small buildings erected in the vicinity of temples and sanctuaries.[1]

The stūpa has become the symbol of the Buddhist doctrine in general and of the final Nirvana in particular. It is the simplest way of representing the doctrine and plays a very important part in Buddhist practices.

In northern Nepal, groups of three square-based chörten with two-tiered roofs called rigsum gompo (*rigs-gsum dgon-po*) representing the three bodhisattvas, Manjuśri, Avalokiteśvara and Vajrapani, are among the more common.

Monumental free-standing gateways, kagani, sometimes as high as 7-8 m, built on the plan of the chörten, are to be found at the entrances to villages.

1. These temples have been described in the sacred literature which, whether for religious or practical reasons, specifies the standards and measurements for their construction.

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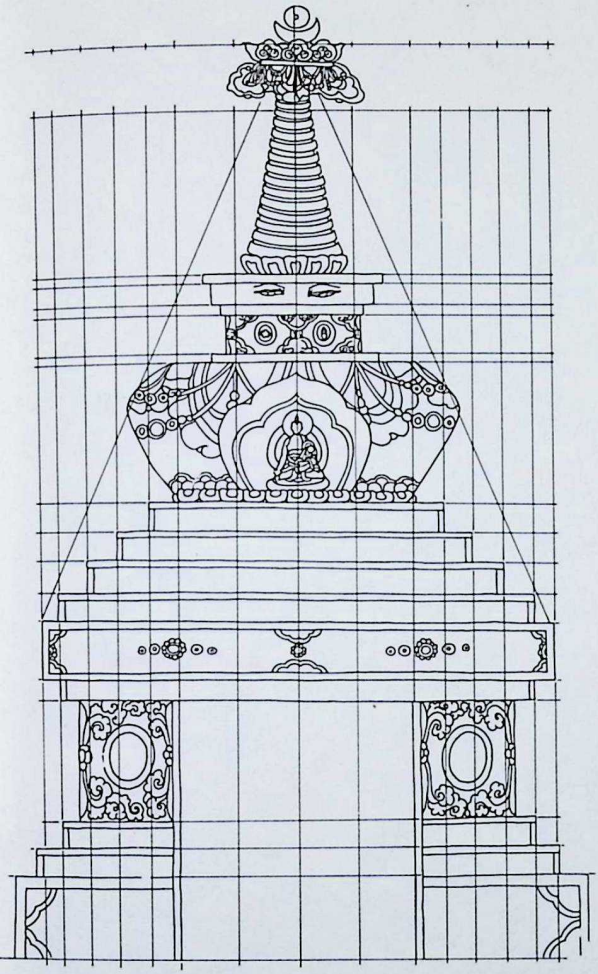

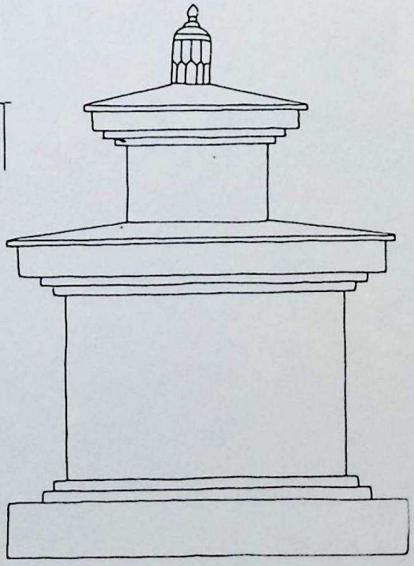

Fig. 7.
Types of chörten
(by A. Kunzang).

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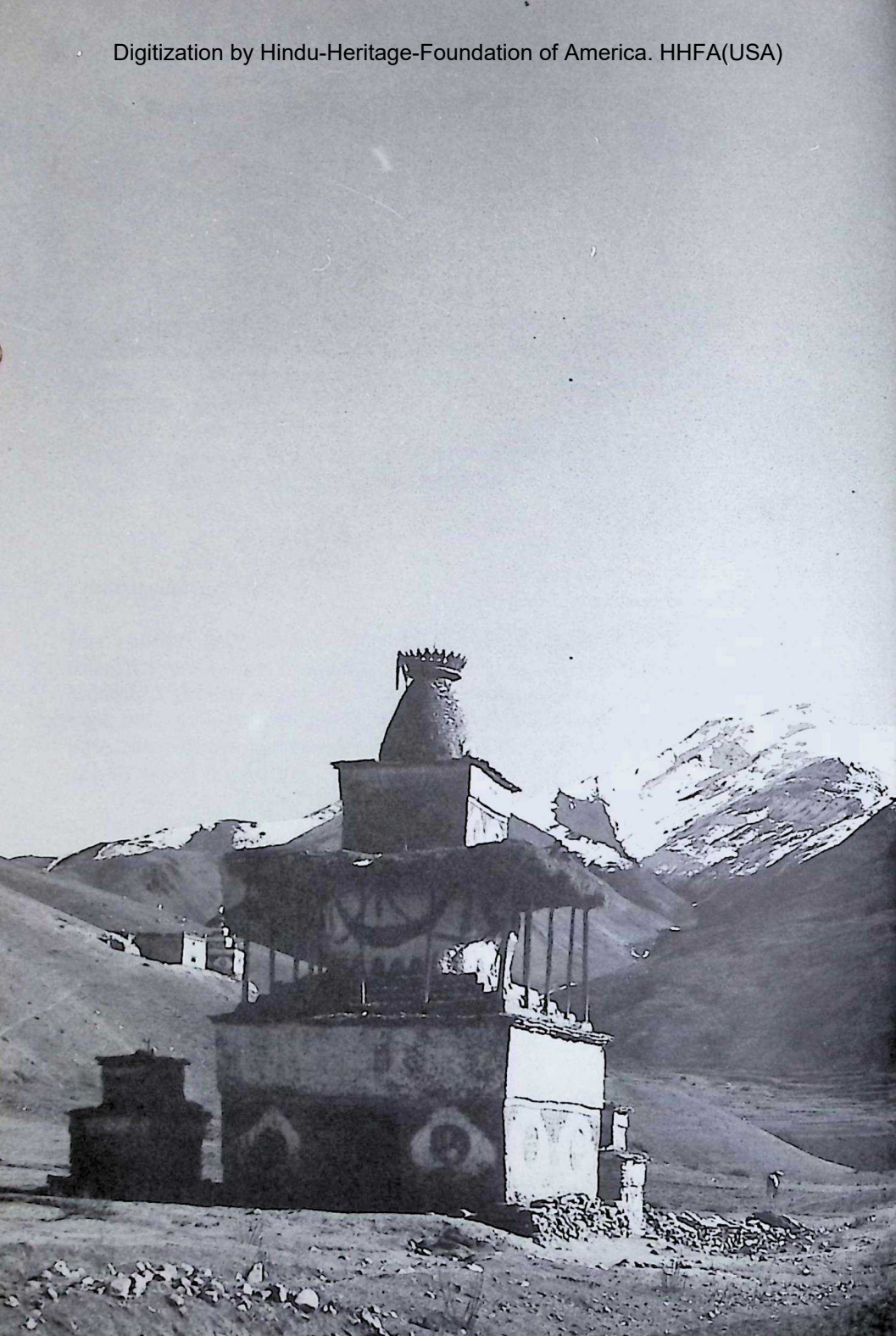

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Prayer-walls: mani *or* mendang

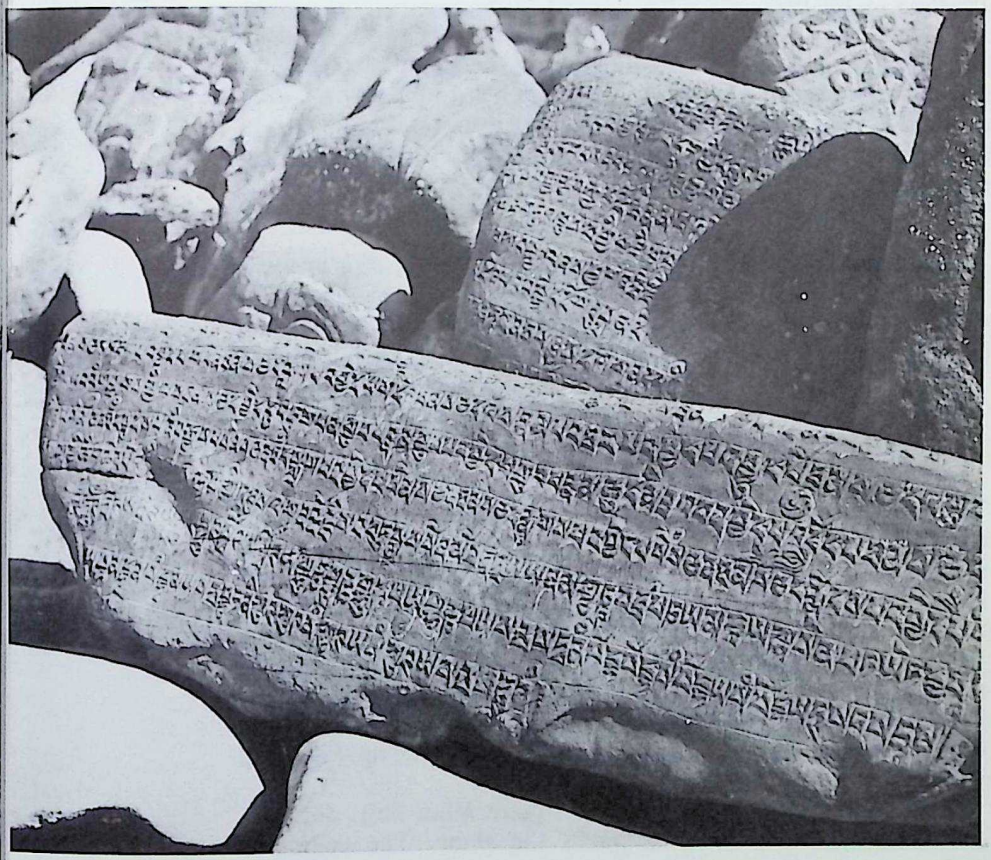
Walls that may be more than 20 metres in length run along the path leading to a temple. They bear medallions engraved with the religious formula *Om Mani Padme Hum*. Sometimes the contents of an entire book are carved on stone slabs, for example the Tibetan translation of a *sutra* summarizing the 'perfection of knowledge'. These slabs are embedded vertically in the walls at a given height and are protected by flat stones forming a roof.

A chörten is often built at the end of the walls, with prayer-wheels set at about 1.50 m above ground level.

As the wayfarer passes by these monuments, he will always seek to keep them on his right, as this is tantamount to reciting the prayers thereon.

◀ *Fig. 8.*
Entrance chörten to the village of Do in the valley of Tarap (Dolpo District).

Fig. 9.
Prayer-wall: stones carved with religious formulae.



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Buildings devoted to minor deities

Buildings devoted to minor earth and aquatic deities are cube-shaped (2 m × 2 m) and crowned by a small pinnacle. Half-way up there is a hollow in which juniper is burned.

Small buildings with prayer-wheels set in motion by water

These buildings, which are square and made of stone, are found near a stream or a diversion of a water-course. The prayer-wheel, or revolving cylinder, is installed in the upper part of the building, the axis being fitted at the base with paddles so that the water turns the prayer-wheel in the same way as mill-wheels are turned.

Porticos and bells

The wooden or stone portico, illustrating the Nepalese influence, is sometimes used as a belfry. Kathmandu bell-founders have long excelled in the casting of large bells as well as of smaller ones used during the services. The portico is built near the entrance door to the temple.

Carved stone slabs

Cliffs and rocks are often engraved with the *Om Mani Padme Hum* invocation.

Description of the temple-sanctuary

The temple is always located in the most advantageous position, that is to say, higher than the neighbouring houses. It is rectangular with a flight of steps leading to the slightly raised first level. A porch, gomjor (*sgo-phyor*), precedes the main hall of the temple. The open façade of the porch is supported by two or four pillars; the three walls are decorated with mural paintings representing the Wheel of Life and the deities 'Guardians of the Four Quarters'. A curtain of woven yak hair, black with white designs, drayöl (*bra-yol*), protects the porch from the wind and the rain.

A double door leads into the square main hall, dükhang (*mdus-khang*), and the altar faces the door. The ceiling is

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supported by pillars, upon which rest the beams and joists following a precise arrangement which gives the structure its rigidity and is one of its main architectural features from the aesthetic viewpoint.

The pillars are finely decorated according to exact and unchanging standards. The main beams are parallel to the main façade for aesthetic reasons.

The altar occupies an entire wall. It is generally of stone up to about 1.20 m high and then comprises a series of finely carved wooden niches and shelves which are painted. The statues of the deities are placed on the altar.

The other walls are painted above a 1.50 m high skirting board.

If the temple has two floors, the head lama's living quarters are on the upper floor together with a smaller sanctuary for the 'defending deities' and the library. All the sacred objects are kept permanently in this part of the temple.

Construction of the temple

Building materials

Stone and clay are always found locally. According to the altitude of the villages, the species of trees used as timber varies:
Pine: *Pinus smithsiana* (Nepali: *Salla*).
Tsuga: *Tsuga dumosa* (Nepali: *Thingra salla*; Tibetan: *kil*).
Fir: *Abies spectabilis* (Nepali: *Gobre salla*; Tibetan: *Kaltag*).
Magnolia: *Magnolia campbelli* (Nepalese: *chap*).
Juniper: *Juniperus excelsa* (Nepalese: *dhub*; Tibetan: *shug-pa*).

Foundations

Once the building site has been decided upon, by divinatory calculations and a religious ceremony, the materials—stones, unfired bricks, earth and sand for mortar—are stacked near the site. Usually the foundations are no more than 40 cm to 50 cm deep. Arable soil mixed with chopped barley straw is used for making the bricks, which are dried for several days in the sun before they are used.

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Carpentry

The wooden door and window frames giving onto the porch are constructed separately; the jambs are decorated with floral designs. The flooring, built separately from the walls, rests on beams laid directly on the ground.

The pillars are made of a quadrangular shaft about 20 cm to 30 cm square with a slight batter. The capital that tops the pillar is three-fifths of the latter's height. It thus ensures a sound base and a better spread of the upper loads. The space between the joists varies from 20 to 25 cm. Quite often they are covered over with planks upon which the joists supporting the floor of the first storey are placed.

Sequence of the construction work:

1. Building of the ground-floor walls with incorporation of the door frames.
2. Laying of the pillars, beams and joists with the beams being set in the walls.
3. Construction of the first-floor walls.
4. Laying of the roofing.

Master builders and craftsmen

In the Kathmandu Valley the work of building and maintenance is done by qualified craftsmen belonging to a particular caste, whereas in the upper regions of Nepal this work is carried out by non-specialists. In every community, one or two men without any specific qualifications can be found who are capable of acting as foremen (*rtsig-dpon*).

Because of climatic conditions and the seasonal agro-pastoral activities, building can be undertaken only at certain periods of the year. The whole community then participates in hauling the materials and laying the foundations. For the woodwork, a carpenter-joiner provides his services only as requested.

Specialization appears in the painting, which only a monk can do. He is taught to paint by a master and the apprenticeship can last one or two years. The work is varied: murals, painting on wood, paper or textiles, the making of images of deities. Religious buildings are decorated according to very strict rules.

The walls of the entrance porch and the main temple as well as the upper part of the chörten gate are usually painted. The lower part up to a height of 1.50 m is coloured brown, with above it

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a frieze and a series of images of divinities. The inner walls and woodwork of the temple are also painted.

Beforehand there is a lengthy preparation of the surface to be painted: first of all, a mixture of two parts clay, one part horse-dung and a half part fine sand is spread over the surface. This first coating is smoothed level with a pebble. A second coating of three parts fine sand and one part clay is then applied and smoothed over while the wall is still damp. The surface then resembles that of porcelain. Finally, it will be covered with a mixture of kaolin and glue called a 'wall carpet'.

Stone engraving

The characters are drawn by the monks and the engraving is done by laymen, often poor people, who copy religious phrases such as *Om Mani Padme Hum*. The remuneration that they receive from the donors also represents an increase in merits for the afterlife.

Wood engraving

Some members of the community specialize in wood engraving (*par-ba*) and possess a set of gouges and chisels for working on poplar and birchwood, which are well adapted to very delicate carving. Once engraved, the boards are coated with ink; sheets of paper are then pressed on to them in order to obtain prints.

Ownership and maintenance of religious buildings

A temple is owned by a community (village, group of villages) or by a family. In the first case the entire community is responsible for the building of the temple and for its upkeep.

Each household contributes hours of labour for the hauling of materials, the laying of foundations, etc., or gifts in kind (grain, butter and tea) to feed the workmen.

Either a man or a woman is appointed guardian, konyer (*sku-gnyer*), and it is his or her duty to replace the lustral water daily and offer the butter lamps.

In a monastery, these duties are performed by a monk.

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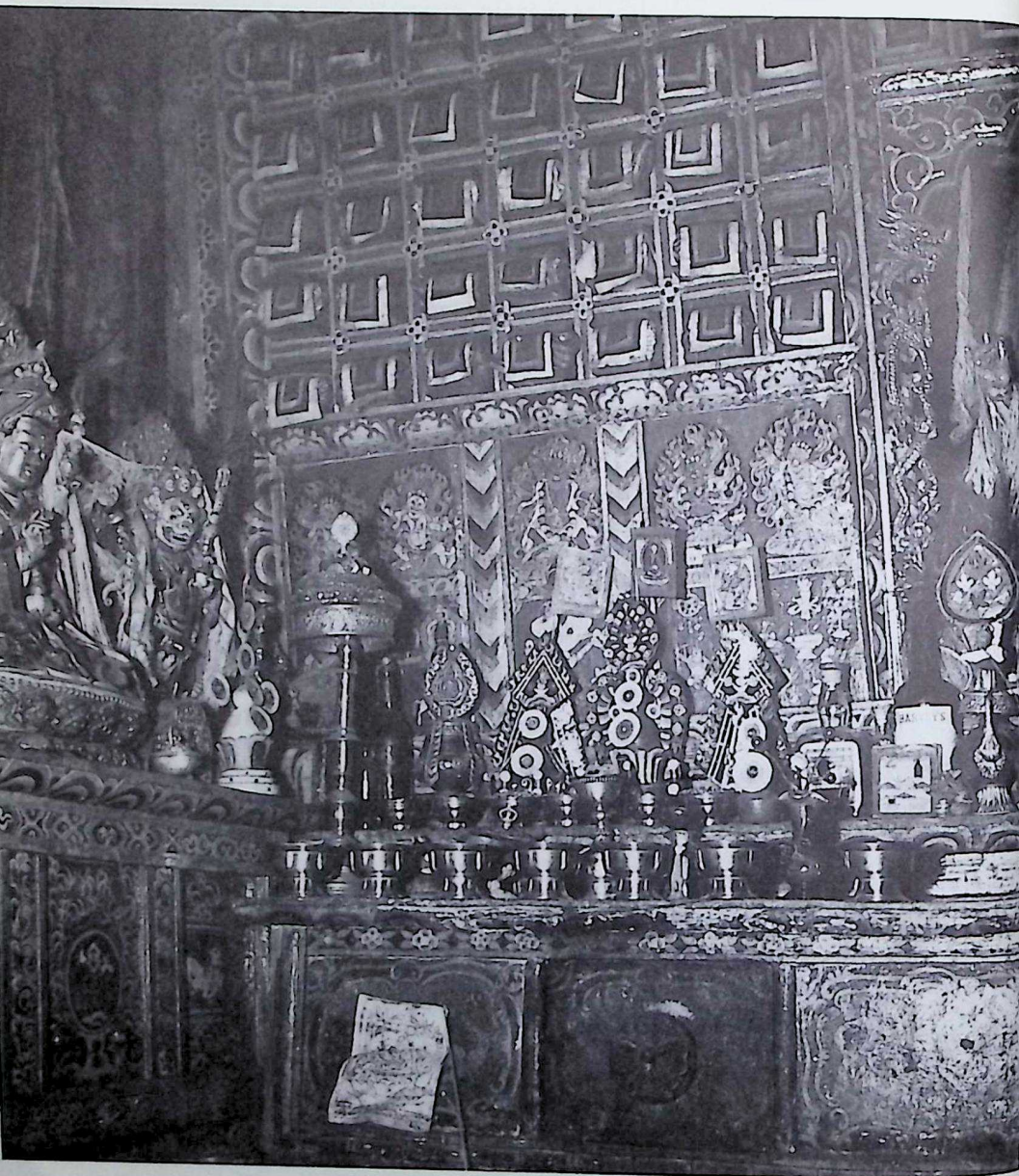

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Movable components

Fig. 10.
Altar of the chapel of Kagar in the valley of Tarap (Dolpo District). Above some cupboards there are niches where statues and books are kept. On the altar are seven vases for lustral water, a butter lamp and various ritual objects.

Movable objects as representations of Buddha's Body and Speech

The importance of these objects cannot be sufficiently stressed: they are vital to religious practices and procure 'merits' both for him who orders them and for him who produces them.

They are the outstanding expression of Tibetan art: whether sacred or profane, they represent a type of decorative research that is spontaneous and inventive. This particular art is first and foremost sacred, its object being the depiction of religious principles. In this context, art becomes enlightenment in a visible form.

Before describing the different kinds of object in detail, it should be remembered that Buddhism gave rise—and continues to do so—to a vast production of paintings, statues, ritual objects and books. Paintings and sculpture provide an objective support for meditation. The divinities are represented according to strict rules. Their proportions, colours, attitudes, gestures and emblems all correspond faithfully to the descriptions found in religious texts (iconographical treatises of Indian origin have been translated into Tibetan). All paintings are anonymous. When a painting is finished a ceremony of consecration is performed.

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Paintings

The term thangka (*thang-ka*), meaning 'that which is unrolled', is used to designate a pious image regardless of the techniques involved: painting, embroidery or appliqué. The image is usually mounted on silk.

Painted thangka are the most frequent. A piece of cotton material stretched over a frame serves as a canvas. The surface to be painted is coated with a mixture of kaolin and glue derived from animal skins. It is then carefully smoothed down with a pebble. The artist uses a geometrical network to mark out the images and then proceeds to colour them.

The composition of the thangka follows strict and unchanging rules: in the centre is represented the divinity or the saint. On a smaller scale, around the central figure, appear the various forms the divinity can assume or the minor deities in his train or again a line of teachers or disciples. One of the most important gods of the Buddhist pantheon is often represented in the top part of the thangka. Sometimes the paintings represent pilgrimage centres.

Usually these paintings are covered by a silk or cotton veil which is raised during ceremonies, meditation sessions or religious instruction.

Fig. 11. Religious masks representing the fierce divinity Gur Dragpo (red).

Statuary

The sculptor uses either clay or metal. The larger statues are made of clay or copper sheeting and a wooden core supports the reliefs. Statuettes in bronze or other alloys are cast by using the lost-wax process. Bases and emblems are produced separately. The statues are polychrome or gilded. They are hollow and contain dedication relics held in place by a copper plate.

Reliquaries

Reliquaries containing the remains of venerable monks are generally copper or silver chörten embossed with turquoise or coral. They are usually placed on the altars on the same level as the statues.

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Current ritual objects

These are lustral water bowls, ewers, butter lamps, and objects pertaining to specific rituals (*mandala*). They are made of silver, brass, copper or bone. Most of these objects are produced in the Kathmandu Valley, where the Newar craftsmen are famous for their artistry.

Musical instruments

Musical instruments are essential to the celebration of rituals; they include drums, bronze cymbals of various sizes, conches, metal horns and oboes.

Masks and costumes for sacred dances

Masks used for dancing (*'cham*) are made of papier mâché and then painted. Occasionally they are made of wood. During the more important festivals of the religious calendar, masked monks incarnate the gods.

Furniture

The altar is usually covered with carved and painted wooden objects.

The shelves on which the monks place the books and the instruments used during worship are delicately carved and painted.

Printed works and manuscripts

A book is always held in great veneration, for it represents Buddha's 'Speech'. Every temple, members of the clergy and some laymen possess printed works and manuscripts, many of them produced with great care.

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Each volume is made up of rectangular leaves wrapped in either silk or cotton cloth and enclosed between two wooden boards. The books are kept on shelves above the altar. Because of the onslaught of rodents, insects and dampness, their conservation is a serious problem. More recently some of the works have also been sold to tourists leaf by leaf.

The *Kanjur* (about 100 volumes), the Buddhist scriptures, and the *Tenjur* (more than 200 volumes), which includes commentaries thereon, and treatises on medicine and grammar are the most important collections of works.

Some temples also possess finely engraved woodcuts of religious texts and divinities used for reproducing texts and making block prints.

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A description of some of the northern Nepal temples

As we have seen, Buddhist religious architecture has developed from a common model.

The temples described hereunder have been chosen for their structural interest, their historical significance for the region, and their relationship to the human environment or the site where they have been built.

They present many different problems which the specialists responsible for the protection and preservation of the Nepalese cultural heritage will have to face.

Descriptions of a private chapel, a village temple, a monastic complex and, where there is one, a pilgrimage centre for each district under study are given below.

Each district has, of course, its own specific problems to face. These will be described together with the temples themselves.

Naturally an exhaustive study of each building cannot be set down. The details are to be found in the specific reports. (For the survey grid which was followed, see Appendices 1 and 2).

Temples of the Humla District

Humla, located in the extreme north-west of Nepal, is one of the most isolated districts. The thinly populated area is only marginally cultivated, and as it is in the Himalayan rain shadow it receives very little precipitation in summer.

It consists of a series of small endogamic groups living on terraced slopes, which are respectively at altitudes of 3,000, 3,500 and 4,000 m. The region has approximately 15,000 inhabitants.

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These groups of Tibetan-speaking people are distributed as follows:

On the east of Simikot: Nying (*Nying-ba*) also known as *Yul-tsho-bzhi*, 'the four groups'.

On the west of Simikot, on the upper Humla Karnali: (a) Kangung, Sanra, Kalo, Charag; (b) La, Yapga, Tamsim; (c) Tumpu tsho dun, Yangkar, Yolwang, Puye, Mutsu Tumpu and Yangrig; and (d) Limi.[1]

The valley of Nying was, according to the tradition, a 'hidden valley' (*sbas-yul*). A local legend says:

Padmasambhava came from India and stayed in a cave near the present-day village of Torpa. The valley was infested by snakes. He killed them with his magic dagger (*phur-pa*). Then he went towards the mountain of Shel-mo-gangs, where he left treasures (*gter*), asking a fairy (*mkha-gro*) to watch them.

Milarepa, the famous saint and poet (1040-1123), came to the valley and stayed in the cave where Padmasambhava had meditated. He had an intuition of the existence of the treasures. When he drew near them, the fairy threw big rocks at him, but they did not hurt the saint; finally Milarepa found the treasures, precious stones of some sort in the form of eggs of very unusual dimensions (*phyag-ril*), and took possession of them.

Fig. 12. Humla District: entrance to the grotto of Dru-phug in Torpa where Padmasambhava and Milarepa meditated. The door opens into the grotto (4.80 × 5 m) containing seven chörten and a statue of Padmasambhava

1. Limi is of the Dri-gung Ka-gyü-pa sect. A pilgrim's guide to the Tise region reports that the Dri-gung Lama Spyan-snga was given Limi by one of the Malla kings (circa thirteenth century). There are three monasteries in the Limi valley, one in each village. The main monastery, the largest, is in Alzhi. It is a two-storey structure with a courtyard in front. It can hold about fifty-five monks, whose quarters are on the second floor. The monks in Limi live in the monastery only during a two-to-three month period in winter, when the main ceremonies occur. Otherwise they live at home and most in fact are either married monogamously, or are part of fraternal polyandrous arrangements. Part of the reason for this derives from the method of recruitment of monks. They are recruited as children on the basis of a tax depending on the status of the family and the number of male children it has. The upper-strata families with two sons are required to make one son a monk. The lower-strata families are required to do this only when they have three sons. Thus almost all the monks have at least one secular married brother.

   Each of the villages also has a *Mani-lhakhang* house which is used sometimes for ceremonies. The monks claim that as recently as two generations ago the rule of celibacy was maintained and frequently comment on the deterioration of religion. The real reasons go deep. But they are trying to maintain their traditions, and the fine for a monk not attending the winter prayer session is the price of one yak, in Limi a sum of about 2,500 rupees. (Communication from M. Goldstein, Professor of Anthropology, Case Western University, Cleveland, United States.)

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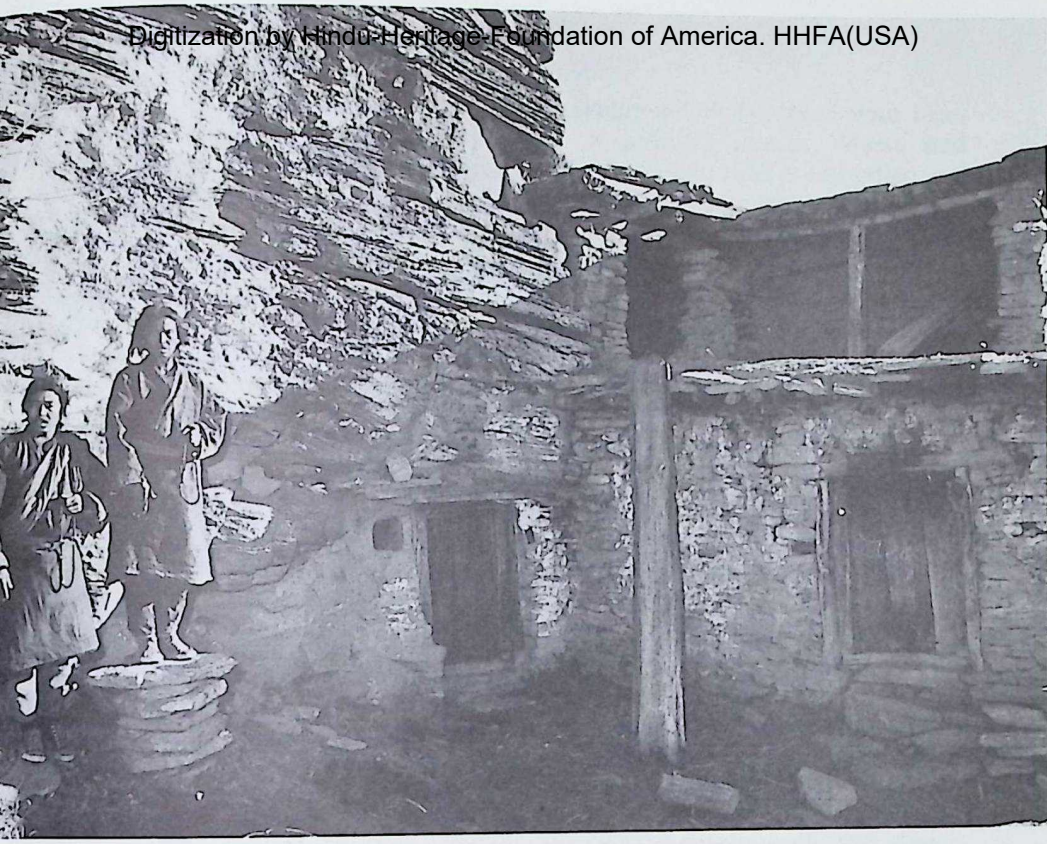

The monks belong to the non-reformed Nying-ma-pa order and the higher social classes. Their religious existence is complementary to their daily activities. Moreover, religion and wealth endow them with the necessary authority in the present structure of the Panchayat system, in which they have important functions.

The temple, which is an integral part of the house, is located for religious reasons on the top floor.

Two exceptions exist: the sanctuary grotto of Dru-phug, where Padmasambhava and Milarepa lived and meditated; and the famous pilgrimage site on the sacred mountain of Shel-mo-gang that is guarded in turn by the lamas of the valley.

The area is interesting from the cultural point of view, as Buddhism, Hinduism and local beliefs co-exist side by side.

Hinduism has penetrated the upper valley of the Karnali, and the activities are concentrated in the shrine of Karpunath located at the confluence of the Humla Karnali and the Dotsam Khola. Mahadev is worshipped in a vast cave where stone representations of the god are enshrined. The main festival on Magh Sankranti attracts villagers from the whole region.

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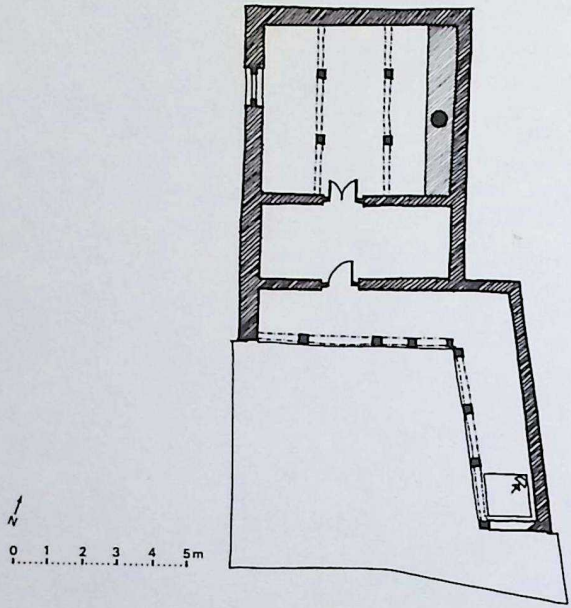

Fig. 13.
Barungse, Gompa Gong (Humla District). Village temple, third-floor plan. (In these plans the large black circle marks the place of the statue of the Buddha.)

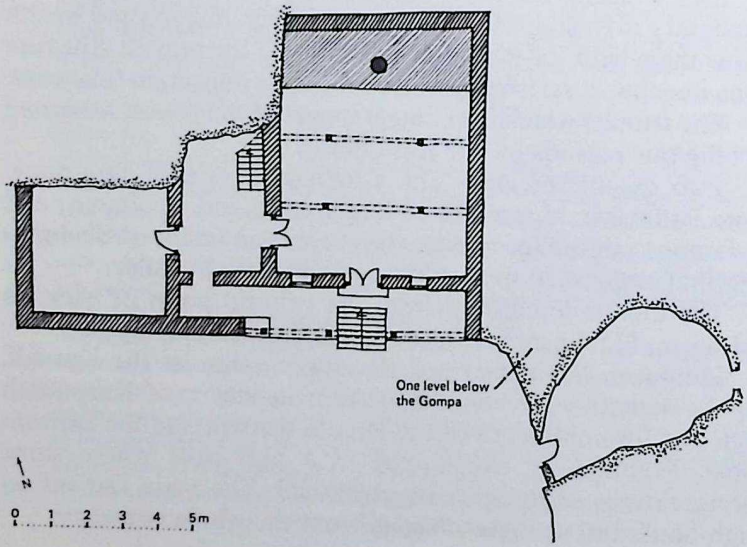

Fig. 14.
Raling Gompa (Humla District). Pilgrimage centre. Ground-floor plan of temple.

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More important are the religious beliefs linked with local gods and the local dynasty. Kalashilto, Loasor, Maśta and Barapale, four brothers, protect the valley; each is embodied in a medium, *dhami*. Kalashilto, whose shrine is located above the upper settlement of Simikot at the place of an old palace of the Koleal kings, is the eldest of the four gods and also the most venerated and powerful.

According to the tradition, Kalashilto, the protective divinity of the region, came from the Indian town of Benares (Kashi). In Simikot lived a demon who destroyed the crops and used to eat people. A king of the Koleal lineage, having heard of the power of Kalashilto, sent one of his assistants to bring him to Simikot, and he killed the demon.

The four *dhami* priests of the divinities make offerings four times a year on the full moon of the months of Saun (July-August), Magh (January-February), Baisakh (April-May), Kartik (October-November).

Village temple of Barungse

The temple of Barungse (or Drangsheb in local dialect), called Gompa Gong (*dgon-pa gong*), is situated high above the village, and is the residence of the lama caretaker. All the Buddhist temples in the area are of the same type.

The building follows the local domestic scale and design, with flat terraced roofs. It is constructed on a rectangular plan (9 m × 15 m), the walls are made of stones bedded with mortar.

The chapel, located on the upper storey (third level), is small (4.70 × 5.40 m) and faces south. The altar is on the eastern side. Four posts support the ceiling and roof above. The wall paintings are of mediocre quality. The chapel is used by the lama for his daily worship and twice a year for village festivals.

Temple of Raling

Raling (*Ra-gling*) is considered the most sacred place in Nying. It is a place of pilgrimage in Humla, and Padmasambhava and Milarepa are associated with it, both having spent some time near the mountain Shel-mo-gangs. The sacred mountain can be circumambulated along three different itineraries in summer. The path is marked out by stone slabs stuck in the ground and heaps of white stones.

The temple of Ralings stands at an altitude of 4,000 metres in a barren landscape under the high peak of Shel-mo-gangs; it is set

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Fig. 15. Raling Gompa (Humla District). Southern façade; on the right, the caretaker's living quarters; on the entrance to the temple.

on a southern slope. The temple and the lama-caretaker's dwelling occupy a surface of 13.80 × 8.20 m. The walls are built of stones; bonding timbers have been inserted at regular intervals to re-establish the levels.

The flat roof is covered with a thick layer of clay banked at the edges to control the flow of rain water or melted snow. A porch, supported by three pillars, gives access to the assembly hall (6 × 5.40 m).

The interior follows the plan of four central pillars supporting the ceiling, the altar being opposite the entrance door. The caretaker's dwelling is located in the western portion of the building on the first floor. To the south-east there is a cave where Milarepa is said to have meditated.

Shrine of Kalashilto (a local divinity)

The shrine of Kalashilto is located to the north of the village of Simikot, close to some very old carved stones and the remains of a monumental fountain. The shrine is a rectangular construction (9 × 6.20 m) with a flat roof open to the southern side. The entrance porch has six carved pillars. Inside, in the centre, four pillars delimit a sacred space to which only the priest in charge, *pujari*, has access.

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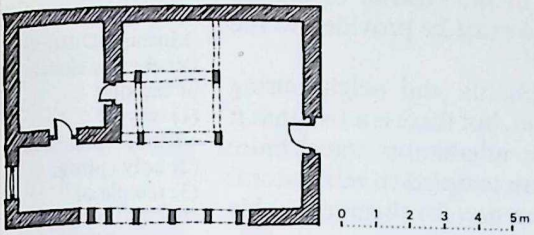

Fig. 16.
Simikot (Humla District). Kalashilto temple. Ground-floor plan.

Fig. 17.
Simikot (Humla District). Kalashilto temple. Main façade.

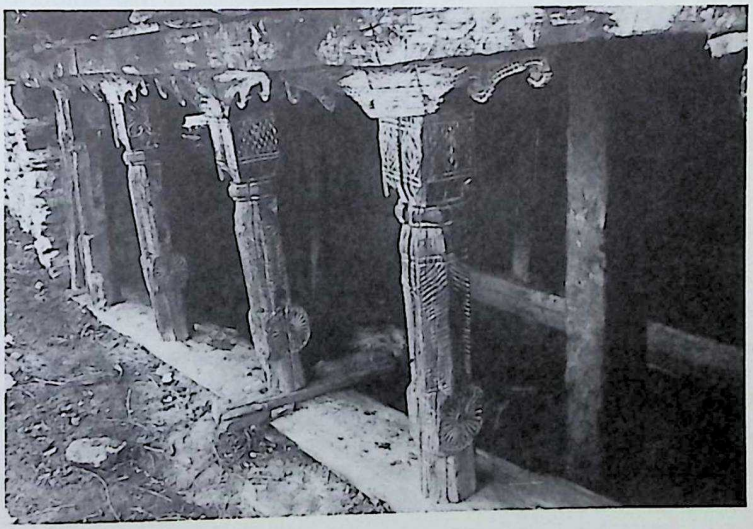

Fig. 18.
Simikot (Humla District). Kalashilto temple. Detail of carved pillars with geometrical designs.

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The temples or domestic chapels of the District of Humla need maintenance, and proper guidance must be provided to the lamas in charge.

Until now the isolation of the Humla and neighbouring districts has been a factor of conservation, but there is a risk that it will handicap preservation. In fact, the inhabitants travel more readily to northern India, where they are tempted to sell cultural objects and import materials that are too new for them to be able to master their use.

Fig. 19. Muktināth (Mustang District). Perspective sketch of the site: (1) way of circumambulation, (2) holy spring, (3) temple of Vishnu/Lokeśwar and the 108 springs, (4) shrine of the serpent divinity, (5) Salamebar Dolamebar temple, (6) group of chörten, (7) prayer-walls, (8) temple of Gompa Sarwa, (9) imprints of Padmasambhava, (10) temple of Marme Lhakhang, (11) sacred forest, (12) and (13) shelters for pilgrims, (14) temple, (15) police check-post, (16) shelter for pilgrims (Raipowa) (17) towards Dzar village.

Temples of the Mustang District

In the Mustang District, the valley of Kali-Gandaki has been the line of communication and zone of contact between India, Nepal and central Asia. Tibetan influence, cultural, religious, political and technical, reached as far south as the Thak region. The customs, traditions and art are Tibetan and the history of the district is intimately linked with religion.

Since 1960 the social, cultural and economic situation of the Buddhist population has undergone a series of changes. Traditionally, an important trade, flowing across the Himalayas, provided opportunity for economic, social and religious contacts. This trade has slowed down, but adjustments to the changed political situation have occurred. The religious institutions have, however, been maintained.

The upper part of the Mustang District (classical Tibetan: *glo-sman-thang*) is under the control of the Sa-kya-pa sect. A religious revival took place through the zeal of the nGor sub-sect of the Sa-kya, founded by Lama *Kun-dga bzang-po* (1382-1457). According to the biography of this lama, Buddhism entered Mustang in the fifteenth century.

The Ka-gyü-pa and Nying-ma-pa orders represent another form of Buddhism, which penetrated at a later date into the region and became established in the southern part.

It is moreover surprising to find in the district a series of Bon-po shrines. This religion, an adaptation of indigenous beliefs into a scheme greatly influenced by Buddhism, has followers in two villages of the area. Pilgrims and lamas from Khams founded these communities. Luprag, north-east of Jomosom, is the main centre of this Bon-po order.[1]

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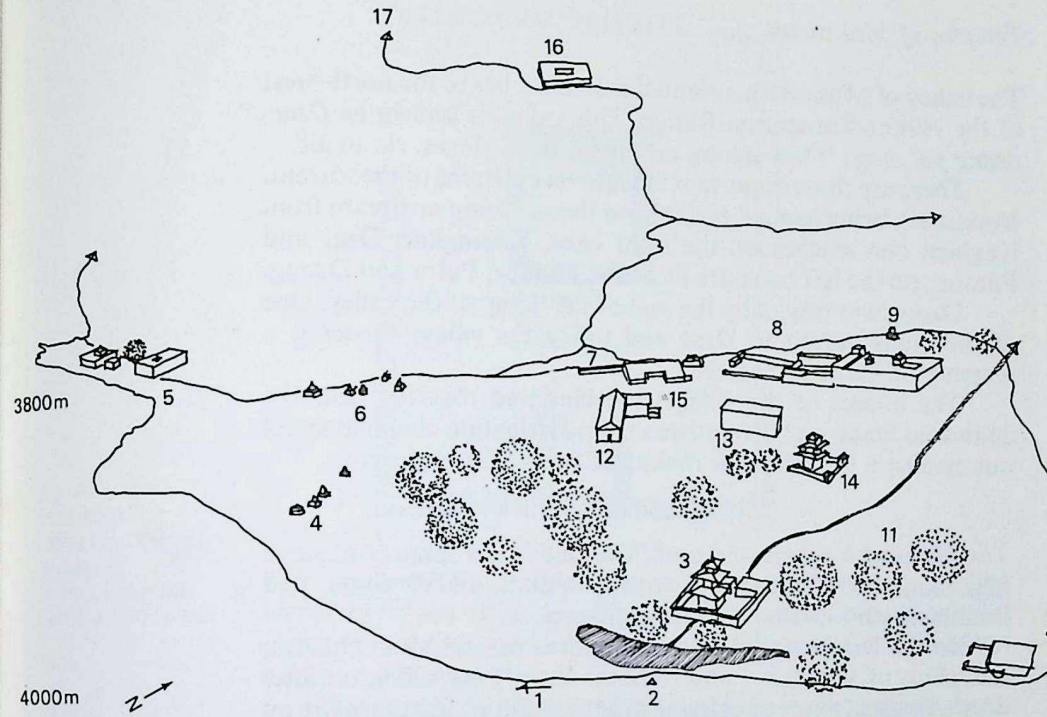

Up to today there is a survival of the ancient beliefs, an original religion uninfluenced or influenced very slightly by Buddhism. In addition, some ancient beliefs linked with the cult of clan ancestors, a truly autochthonous religion, still exist.

The temples of Muktināth, a pilgrimage centre where emanations of natural gas have long been worshipped, will be described successively. Then will follow a description of the monastery and village temple of Dzong, which are incorporated into the fortress that dominates the village. Lastly the monasteries of Kutsapternga and Cherok will be described.

1. The Bon-po lamas have contacts with members of the same order in Dolpo and Tichurong (Tarakot), and in winter go to Mussorie in India where there is now an important Bon-po centre. There are smaller Bon-po temples in Dzar, Jomosom, Thini and Nabrikung, above Larjung.

   The inhabitants of Luprag and Thini are Bon-po. It seems that the proximity of the sacred cave of Guru Sang-phug below the Dhaulagiri glacier is the reason for the presence of a Bon-po temple in Nabrikung.

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Temples of Muktināth

The valley of Muktināth, oriented east-west, lies to the north-west of the Nilgiri-Annapurna Range. This valley is known as *Dzar-dzong yul drug*: 'Dzar-dzong and the other villages, six in all'.

There are three important villages on each side of the torrent, Muktināth being located high above them. Going upstream from Kagbeni one reaches on the right bank Khyingkar, Dzar and Purang; on the left bank are located Chönkor, Putra and Dzong.

Dzong was originally the seat of the 'king' of the valley. One of the kings moved to Dzar and today the village leader is a member of the royal lineage.

The houses of the villages are clustered together near the cultivated fields, and the settlements and irrigation channels stand out against a landscape of rocks and brown barren earth.

The Muktināth pilgrimage sites. Muktināth is a famous place of pilgrimage for Hindus who worship Vishnu and Brahma, and Buddhists who honour Padmasambhava.

In the Hindu tradition, Muktināth is named Muktichhetra, the 'place of salvation', and to bathe there gives salvation after death. Brahma made an offering in Muktināth by lighting a fire on water, these two elements being normally incompatible.

This sacred fire still burns on water, stones and earth in the temple of Jwala Mai. Padmasambhava visited the place and spent some time in meditation. The eighty-four Great Magicians, (*siddha*) on their way to Tibet left their pilgrim staffs, which grew into poplars surrounding the shrine.

The pilgrimage place, located at 3,800 m, is on a west-facing mountain slope. A grove of poplar trees indicates its location in an otherwise treeless landscape.

The religious buildings and various shrines are scattered about at an altitude of between 3,700 and 3,980 m. (See Fig. 19.)

The 108 sacred springs (Fig. 19, No. 3). The water of a sacred spring flows through 108 spouts made of gilded copper or brass in the shape of bull heads. These spouts, embedded in a wall two metres high, have been given the Tibetan name: Chumig gyatsa (*Chu-mig brgya-rtsa*) ('Place of the hundred springs').

The water then flows through a grove of poplar trees and operates some prayer-wheels. Pilgrims drink a few drops of water and take a ritual bath.

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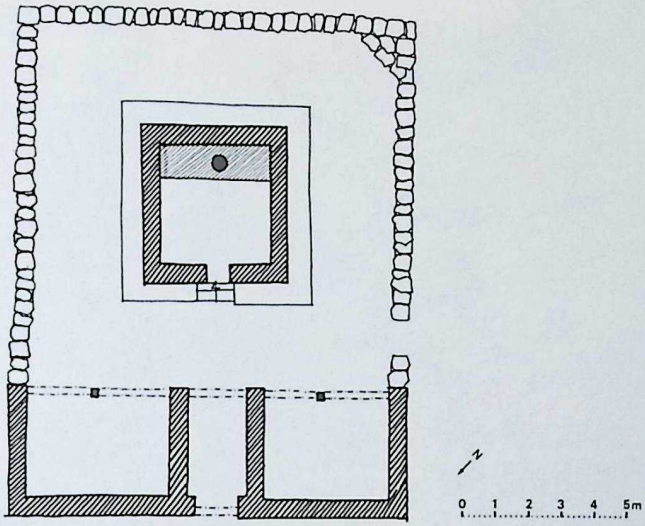

Fig. 20. Muktināth (Mustang District). Temple of Vishnu/Lokeśwar. Ground-floor plan.

The temple of Vishnu/Lokeśwar (Tibetan: *spyan-ras gzigs klu-khang rgyal-pu*) (Fig. 19, No. 3). This temple, which is free-standing in a courtyard adjacent to the 108 springs, is built in the traditional Newari style (5.55 × 5.55 m).

The temple has three projecting roofs in diminishing tiers. The topmost roof is capped with a gilded brass pinnacle.

The design and details of the temple and roof construction are basically the same as in the Newari buildings.

The temple contains images of Vishnu (which the Tibetans call Avalokiteśvara), Lakśmi, Sarasvati and the Garuda bird, Vishnu's mount.

Salamebar Dolamebar Gompa (Nepalese: Jwala Mai; Tibetan: *Sa-la me-'bar rdo-la me- 'bar dgon-pa,* 'The temple of the miraculous fire') (Fig. 19, No. 5). The temple is rectangular in plan (exterior dimensions: 9.40 × 6.40 m). The walls are in rough stone bedded in a thin mud mortar.

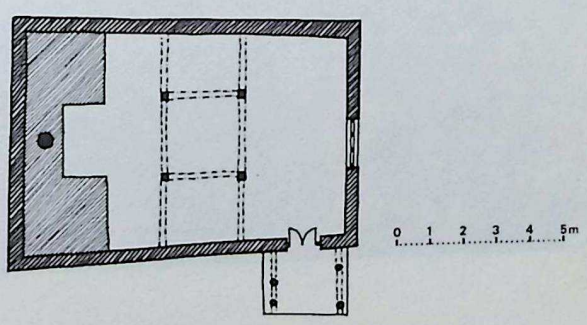

Fig. 21. Muktināth. Temple of Salamebar Dolamebar. Ground-floor plan.

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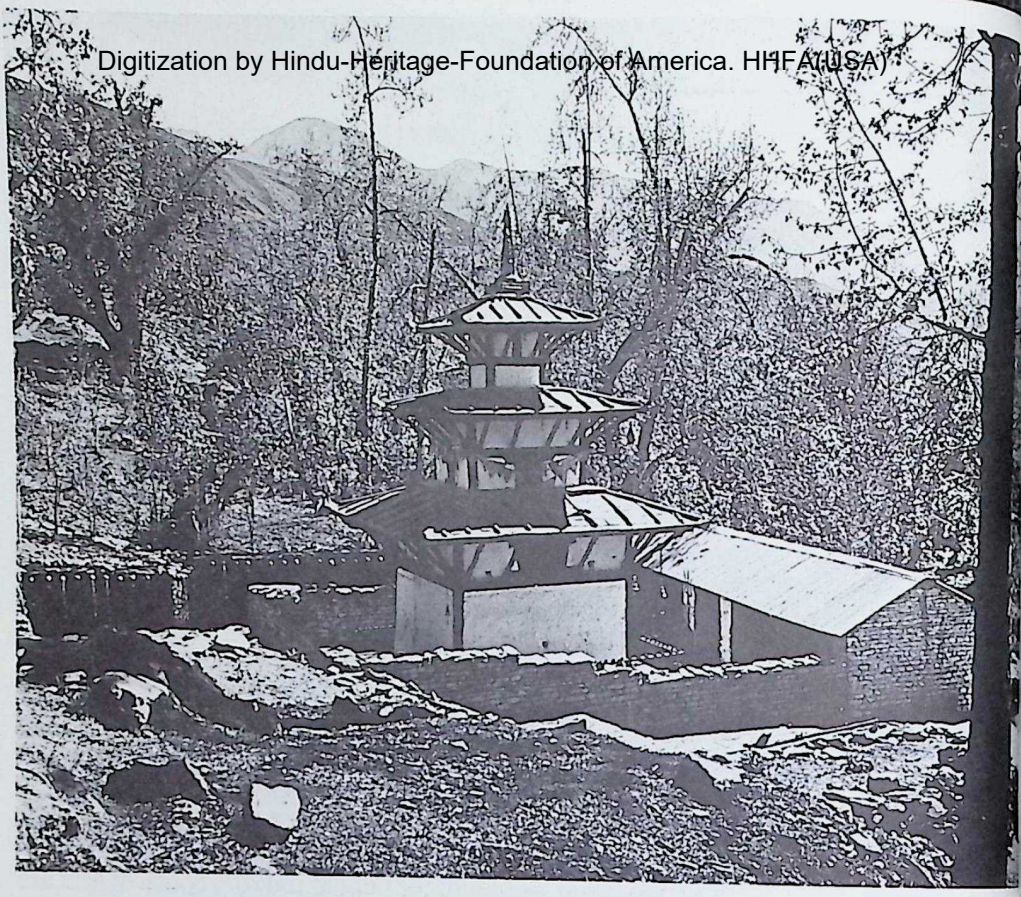

Fig. 22.
Muktināth (Mustang District). Temple of Vishnu/Lokeśwar. To the left: the 108 springs. To the right: shelter for pilgrims.

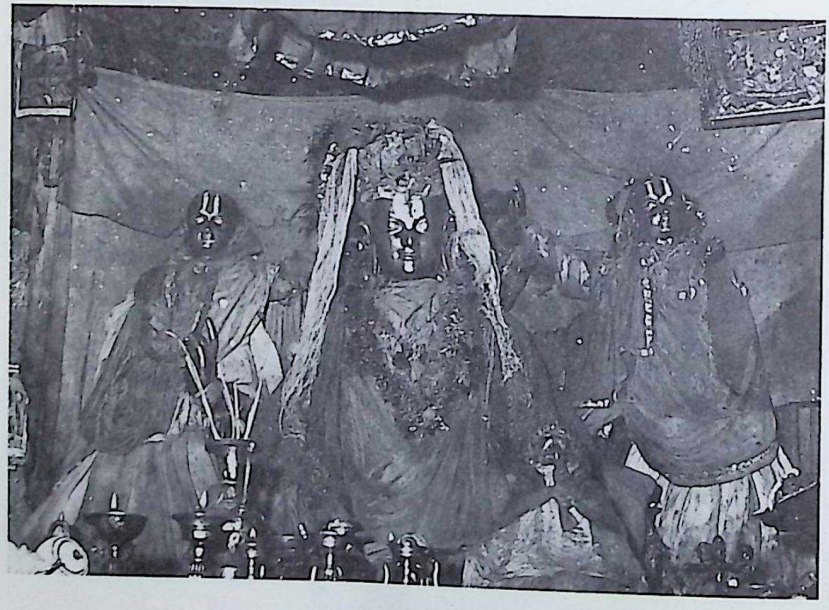

Fig. 23.
Muktināth (Mustang District). Temple of Vishnu/Lokeśwar. Interior of the shrine.
Centre: a statue of Vishnu/Lokeśwar flanked by Lakśmi and Sarasvati. In the foreground: the Garuda bird, vehicle of Vishnu.

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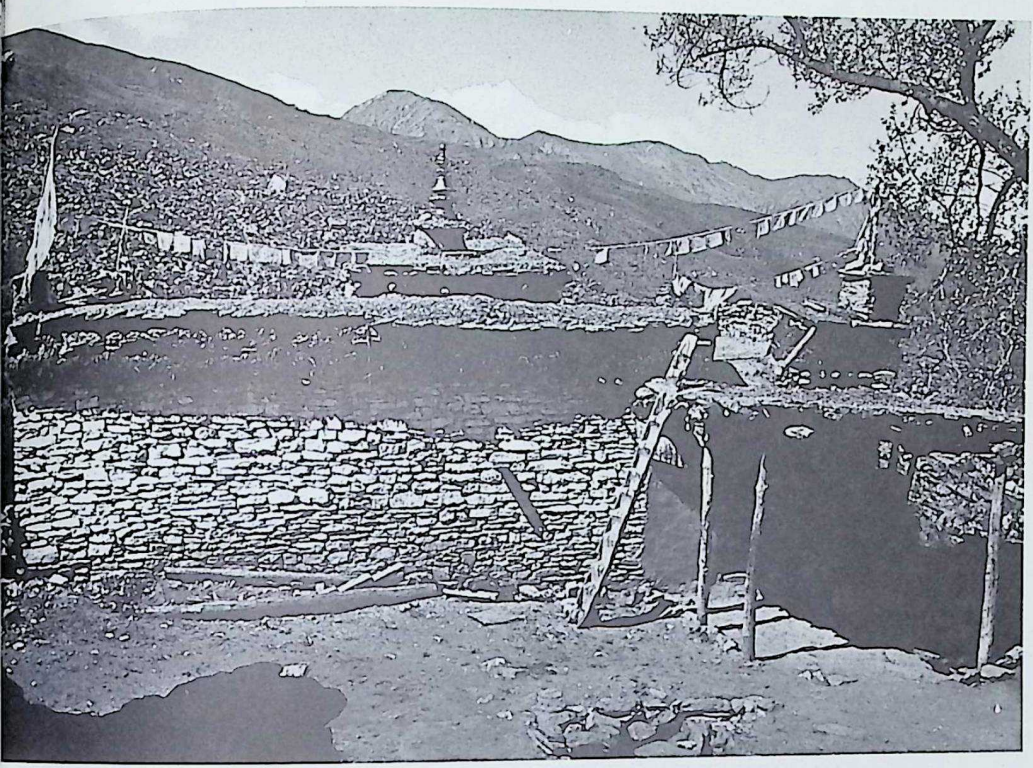

Fig. 24.
Muktināth (Mustang District). Salamebar Dolamebar, terraced roof with lantern. North-eastern façade.

Fig. 25.
Muktināth (Mustang District). Salamebar Dolamebar. Altar and statue of Avalokiteśvara. On the lowest level: the shrine where natural gas burns.

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The roof is flat, supported by four pillars and a structure of main beams on which the joists rest. There is a small lantern above the area delimited by the four pillars. A parapet protects the vulnerable point of junction between the wall and the roof.

The interior walls are plastered and decorated with wall paintings. The ground floor is made of wood and laid loosely over joists which are set directly onto the earth.

On the altar are statues of Padmasambhava, Avalokiteśvara and Vajradhara. Natural-gas flames burn in small recesses under the altar; on the left 'the earth burns', in the middle 'water burns', on the right 'stone burns'. Water runs beneath the temple and comes out through a pipe on the western side.

The temple of Marme Lhakhang (*Mar-me lha-khang*: 'temple of the lamps') (Fig. 19, No. 10). Marme Lhakhang is located north-east of the site beyond the grove of poplars. It is a two-storeyed building (16 × 8 m) with a courtyard and an entrance porch. The roof is terraced. The walls are made of rammed earth and random bonded stones. In the assembly hall, four pillars support the ceiling. The whole building is very dilapidated and in need of urgent repair.

Fig. 26. Marme Lhakhang: eastern façade. On the right, the lantern gives light to the temple proper.

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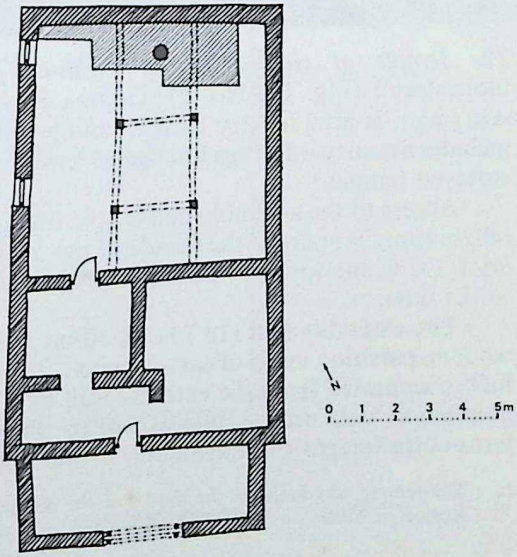
Fig. 27.
Muktināth
(Mustang District).
Marme Lhakhang.
Southern façade.

Fig. 28.
Muktināth
(Mustang District).
Marme Lhakhang.
Ground-floor plan.



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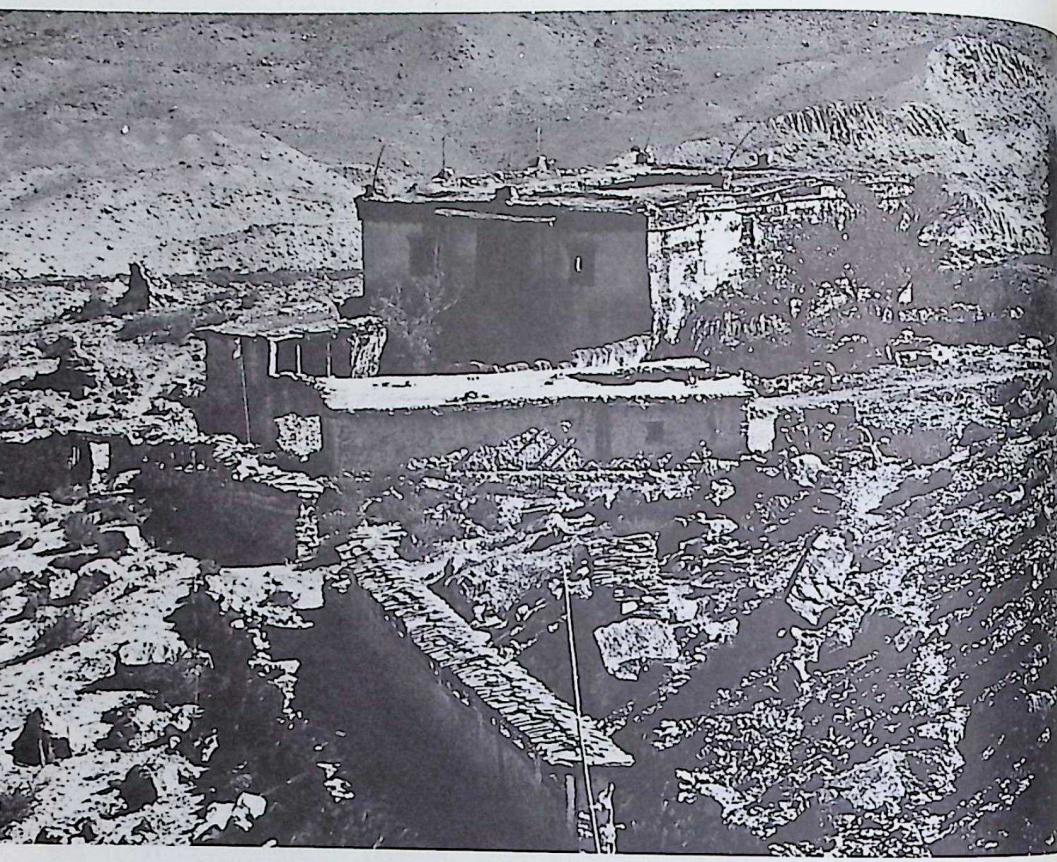

Fig. 29. Muktināth (Mustang District). Gompa Sarwa. There is a courtyard in front of the temple. In the foreground: prayer-walls.

The temple of Gompa Sarwa (*dgon-pa gsar-pa*: 'The new monastery') (Fig. 19, No. 8). Gompa Sarwa, built only forty years ago, is now in very bad condition. The building complex includes a courtyard with a kitchen, several rooms and a main two-storeyed temple.[1]

Access to the assembly hall is up a flight of steps. A series of pillars supports part of the façade of the upper storeys. A double door, the framework of which is finely carved and painted, leads to the interior.

The assembly hall (10.70 × 18.50 m) is divided in half by a wooden partition made of carved panels. The northern part of the hall is separated from the external wall by a deambulatory; it is possible to walk around this part of the shrine. On the altar are terra-cotta images of Sakyamuni, to the right Padmasambhava

1. The temple was built on the model of the one in Tradum, Autonomous Region of Tibet.

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Fig. 30.
Muktināth, Gompa Sarwa. Details of the ceiling structure.

Fig. 31.
Muktināth, Gompa Sarwa. Details of the structure.

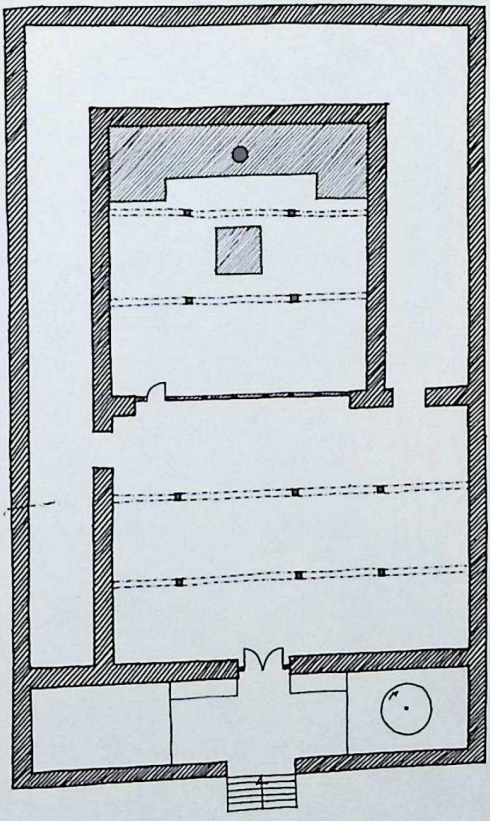

Fig. 32.
Muktināth (Mustang District). Gompa Sarwa. Ground-floor plan.

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◀*Fig. 33.*
Muktināth (Mustang District). Gompa Sarwa: carved temple door surmounted with lion heads.

Fig. 34.
Muktināth. Gompa Sarwa: statue of Padmasambhava.

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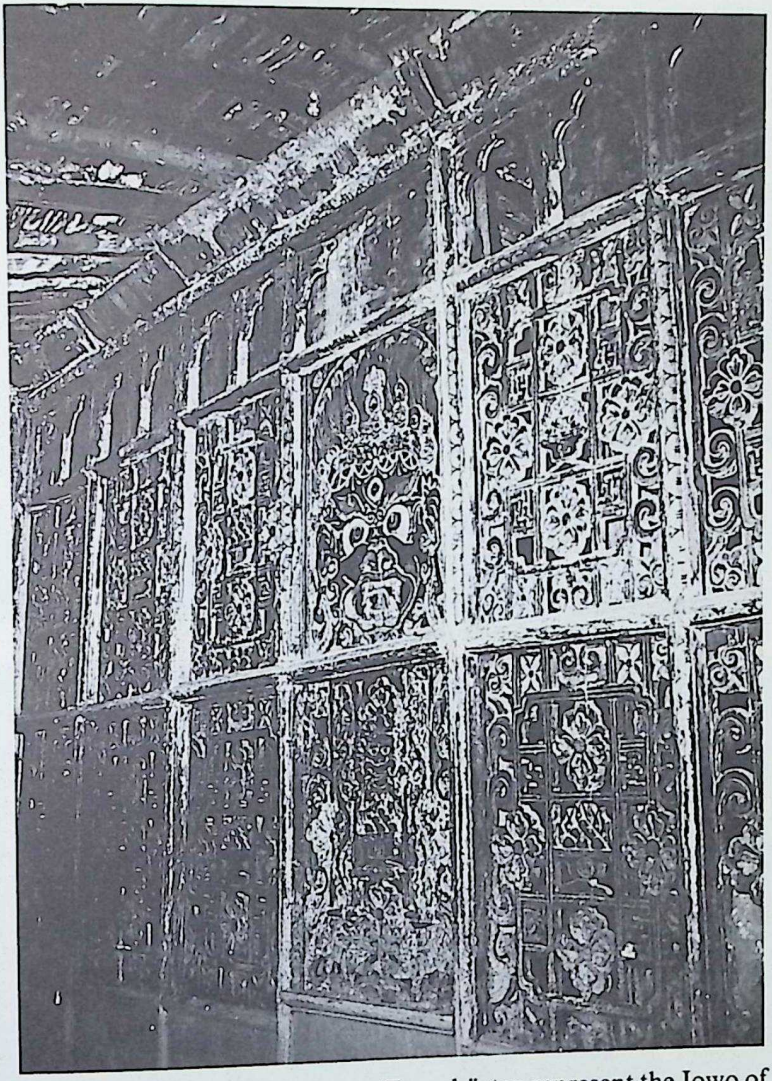

◀*Fig. 35.*
Gompa Sarwa: wooden screen made of carved panels.

Fig. 36.
Muktināth, Gompa Sarwa: wooden screen separating the two parts of the assembly hall.

and on the left Avalokiteśvara. Two chörten represent the Jowo of Kyirong.

All the temples of Muktināth are cared for by nuns or old women from the villages of Dzar, Purang and Khyinkar; they belong to the Nying-ma-pa order and receive donations from the three villages and from the pilgrims. A Hindu priest from Rakhu (near Beni) acts as *pujari* for the Hindu devotees. The main religious festival is held on the full moon of the seventh month of the Tibetan calendar: Yartön (*dbyar-ston*), in August-September.

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Monastery of Dzong

Dzong (*rdzong*) (Survey of India: Chohang), which means 'fortress' in Tibetan, is the largest of the six villages of Dzar-Dzong-Yul drug. It was originally called the 'Peak of Supreme Victory' (*Rab-rgyal rtse*). The ruins of the fort are impressive in their dominating positions. Dzong was the seat of the chief of the whole valley.

The monastery is built inside the fort at the highest level and is the only building still in fairly good condition. The religious establishment belongs to the Sa-kya-pa (*Ngor-pa*) sect. The building (ext. dim.: 15 × 13.30 m) is an intricate complex of rooms at two levels, mostly monks' dwellings and kitchens.[1] The walls are made of rammed earth. The assembly hall (9.35 × 12.50 m) on the lower level is open in the centre to the first floor and then by a lantern to the flat roof. On the altar there are statues of Sakyamuni and Lama Tenzing Repa.

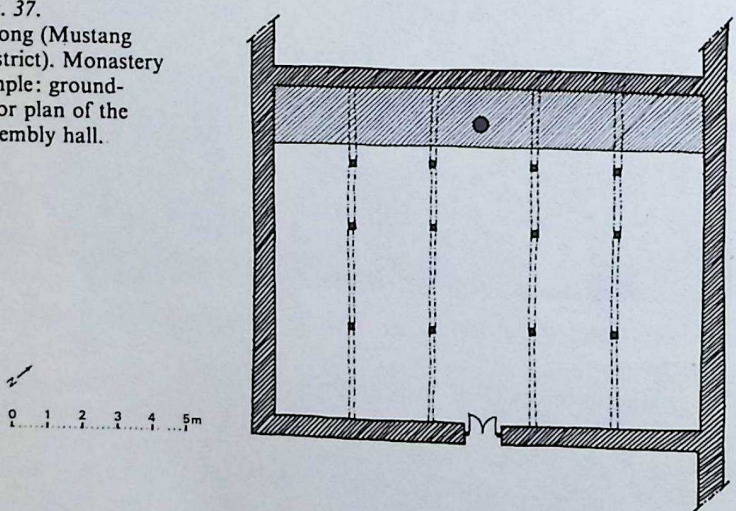
The hall is painted with murals of great beauty, though in a poor state of preservation.

The upper level is divided into a kitchen used during important ceremonies, and the chapel dedicated to the defending divinities. This gompa of historical importance is in need of urgent repair.

Fig. 38.
Dzong: northern side of the ruined fortress of Rab-rgyal-rtse. The monastery is located on the highest level to the right.

Fig. 39.
Dzong (Mustang District). Monastery: altar.

Fig. 37.
Dzong (Mustang District). Monastery temple: ground-floor plan of the assembly hall.



1. There are only three rooms in good condition today.

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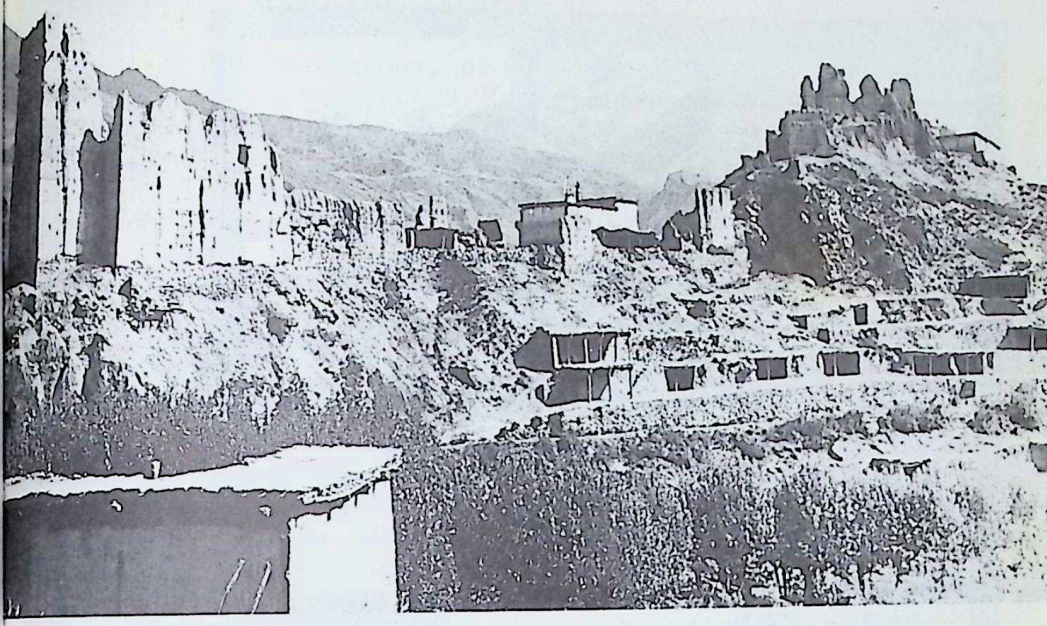

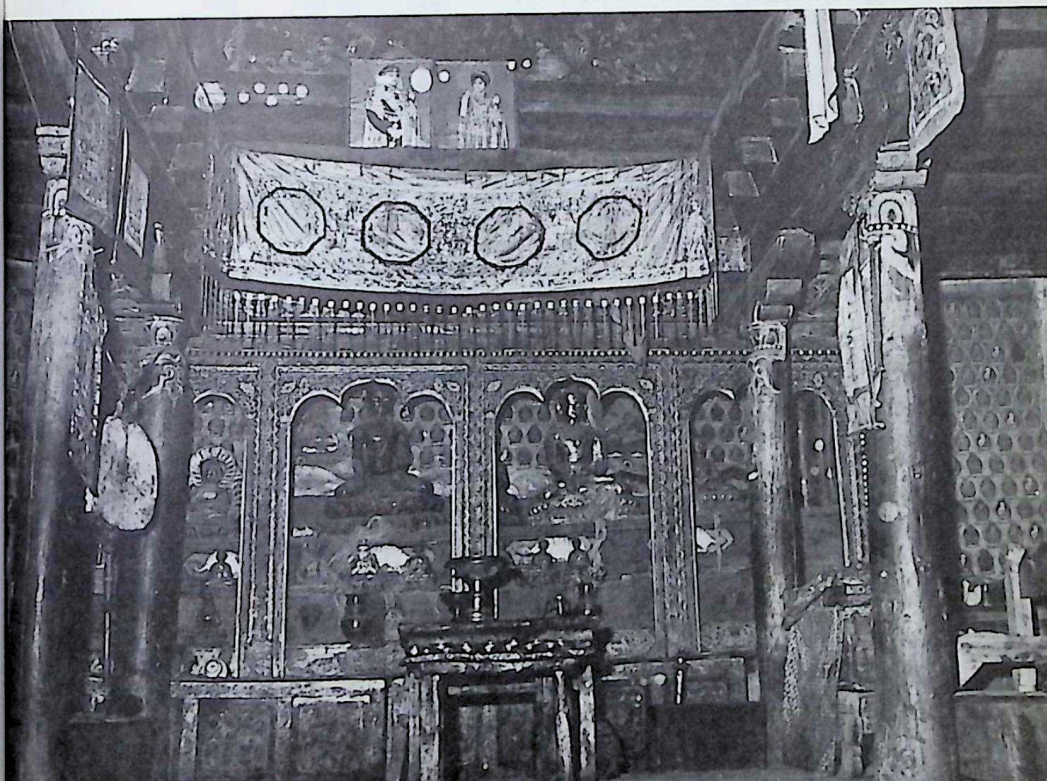

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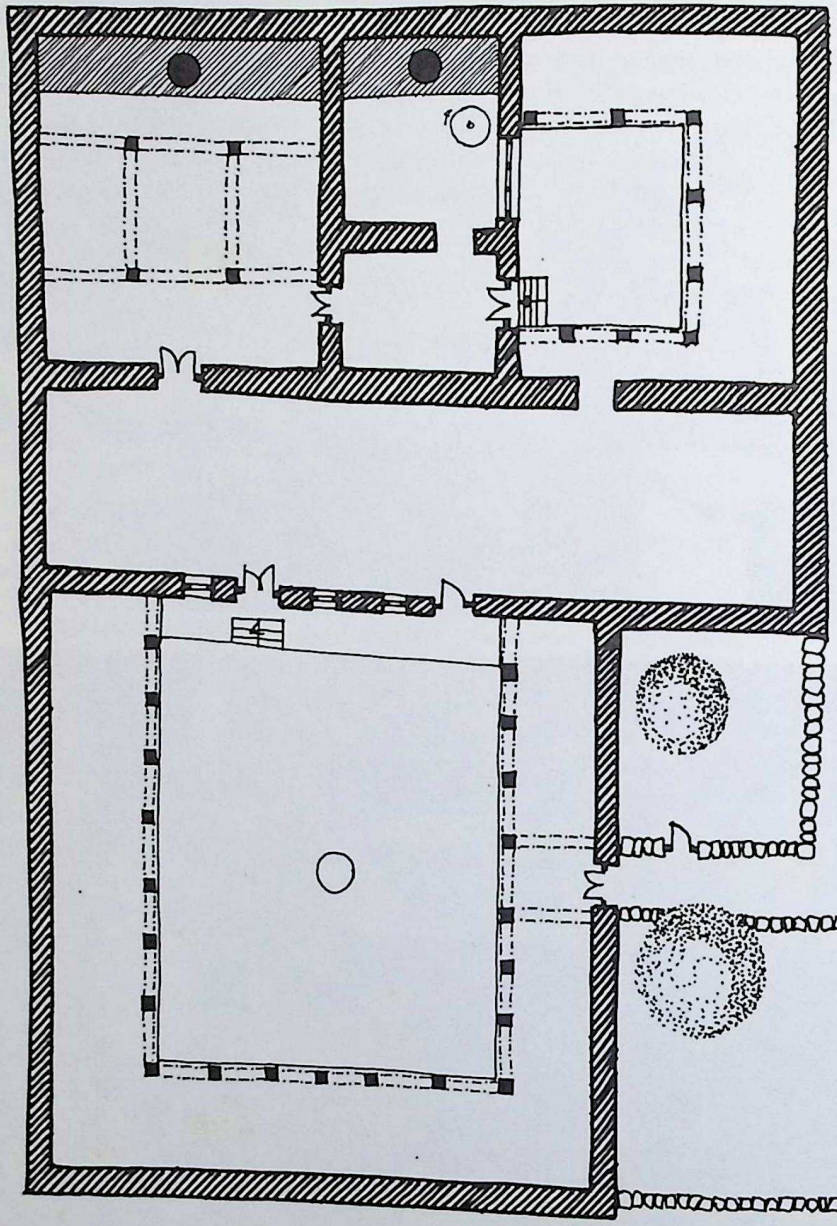

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Monastery of Kutsapternga

The monastery of Kutsapternga (*sku-tshab gter-nga*): 'Five treasures of Bodily Representation') is located on a level site at an altitude of 3,000 m on a spur dominating the valley to the north-east of Marpha with a beautiful view of the Kali Gandaki valley. Until 1973, the temple with its courtyard and dwellings opened to the north-east.

The normal approach is from the east by the route from Thini. On the way up, the faithful worship a sacred lake and the imprints left by Guru Rinpoche. Many pilgrims come to the temple for the annual ceremonies (seventh Tibetan lunar month) to worship the five treasures brought from the monastery of Samye in central Tibet.

Fig. 40. Kutsapternga (Mustang District). Monastery: ground-floor plan.

The assembly hall is very big (9.25 × 7.75 m; height: 3.30 m) and finely decorated. The upper parts of the walls are covered with murals: on the left there are the various 'Tranquil' and 'Fierce' divinities, and on the right is Padmasambhava in his different manifestations. The lower parts of the walls are painted brown. The lantern is also finely painted.

On the western side of the altar is a row of images of Maitreya, a gilded bronze (height: 1.50 m), Avalokiteśvara (height: 1.50 m), Vajradhara, Amithaba, Sakyamuni, Padmasambhava.

The most interesting part of the construction is the former entrance to the north-east with its carved doors, lintels and pillars; these and the beams exhibit a fine degree of craftsmanship.

The assembly hall was repainted in 1956. In 1973, the monastery was extended by the addition of a two-storeyed gallery on a square plan on the southern side of the main building and at the same time the terraced roofs were repaired. Outside, to the north-east, there is a house which serves as a kitchen during important ceremonies.

A community of monks of the Ka-gyü-pa order is in charge of the upkeep of the temple. The head lama died in 1972 and has not yet been replaced. There is no caretaker living in Kutsapternga (offerings are made on the tenth day of each lunar month).

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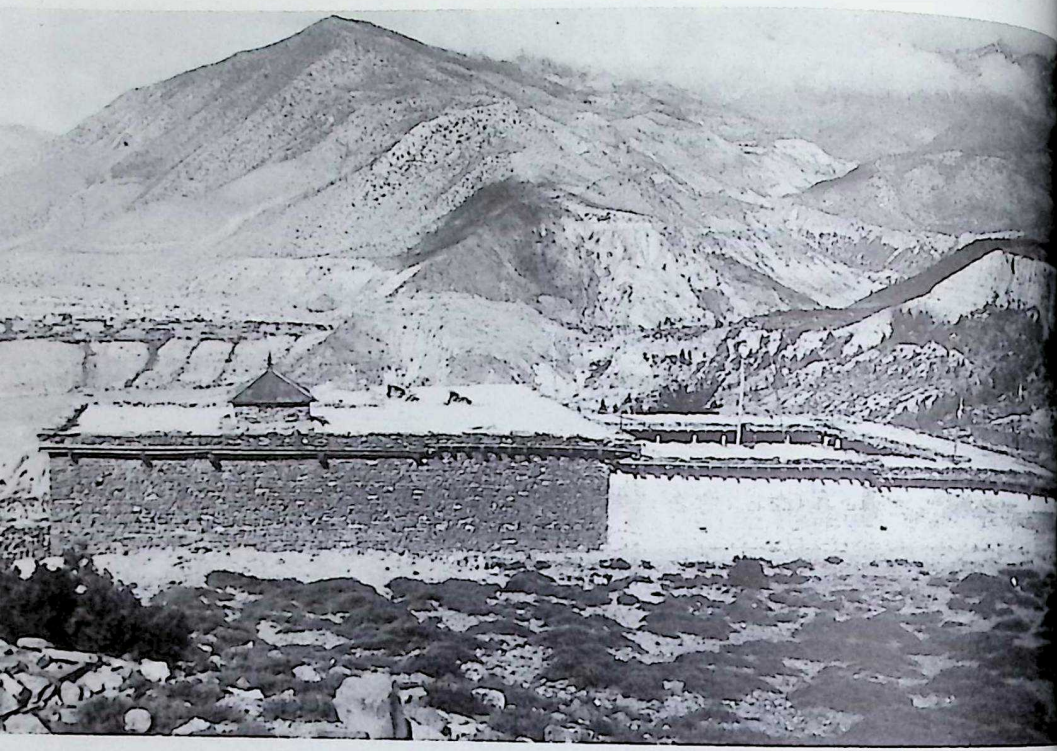

Fig. 41.
Kutsapternga.
Monastery with
newly built section
on the right.

Fig. 42.
Kutsapternga.
Monastery: statue
of Sakyamuni.

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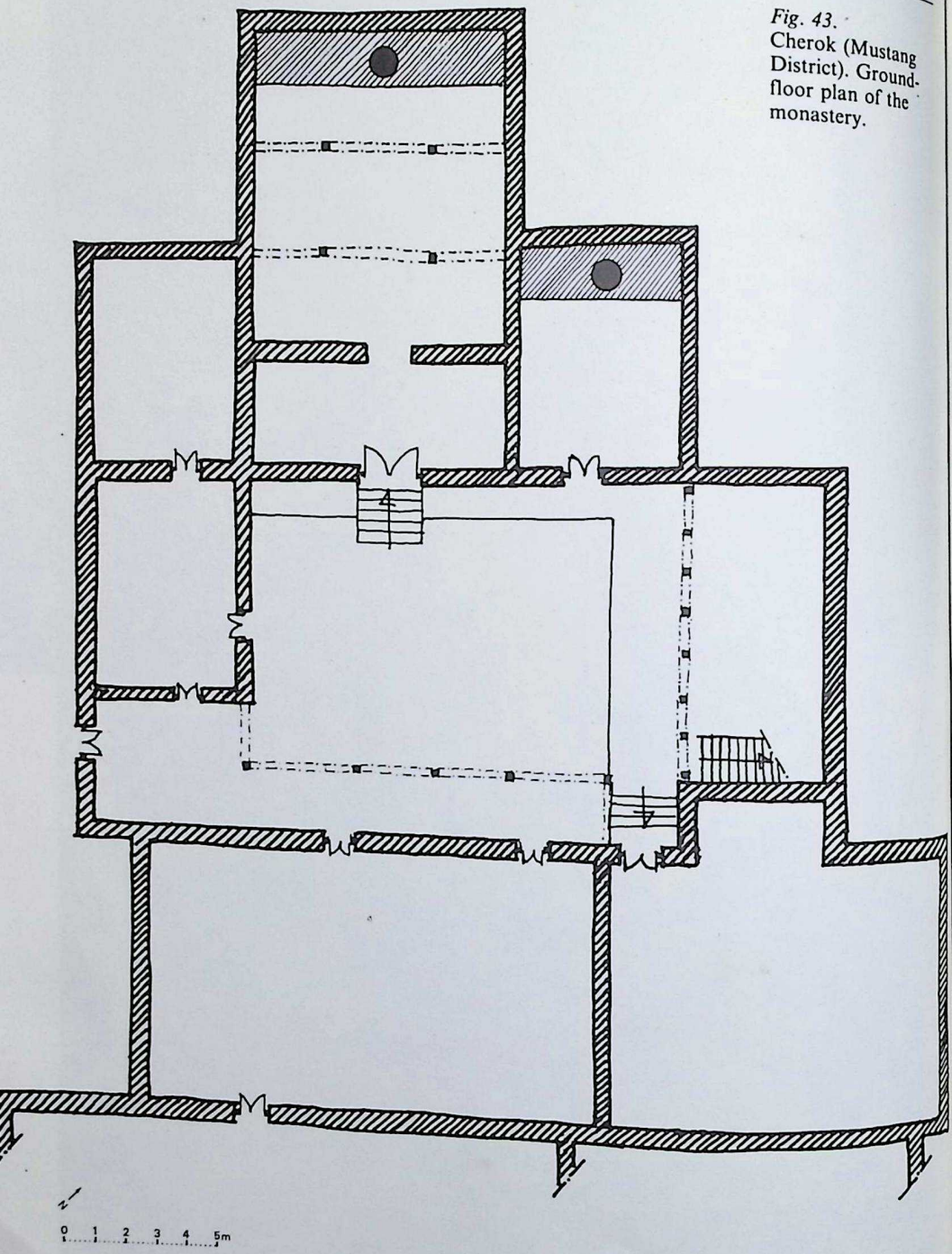

Fig. 43. Cherok (Mustang District). Ground-floor plan of the monastery.

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Fig. 44. Cherok. Main façade of the monastery looking south-east.

Monastery of Cherok

The monastery of Cherok (Survey of India: Chairo) is located on the left bank of the Kali Gandaki, below Marpha at an altitude of 2,680 metres.

Within the monastic complex, the temple called Sanga Chöling as it stands today, was built in the eighteenth century by Lama Sangye. The buildings surround a courtyard: the main temple and a lateral chapel on the north-west, the dwellings of the monks on the south-east and the kitchen on the west. A two-storeyed gallery runs along the north-east side. The assembly hall (7.30×9.25 m) is on a higher level than the courtyard. A statue of Sakyamuni stands in the centre of the altar. In the adjacent chapel there is a 3-metre-high statue of Padmasambhava.

Once an important monastic centre, the temple has now only four nuns acting as caretakers.

The District of Mustang is changing rapidly and tourism is having an ever greater impact. This could be an opportunity to develop a programme of conservation in a region where the monuments are of historical and cultural value.

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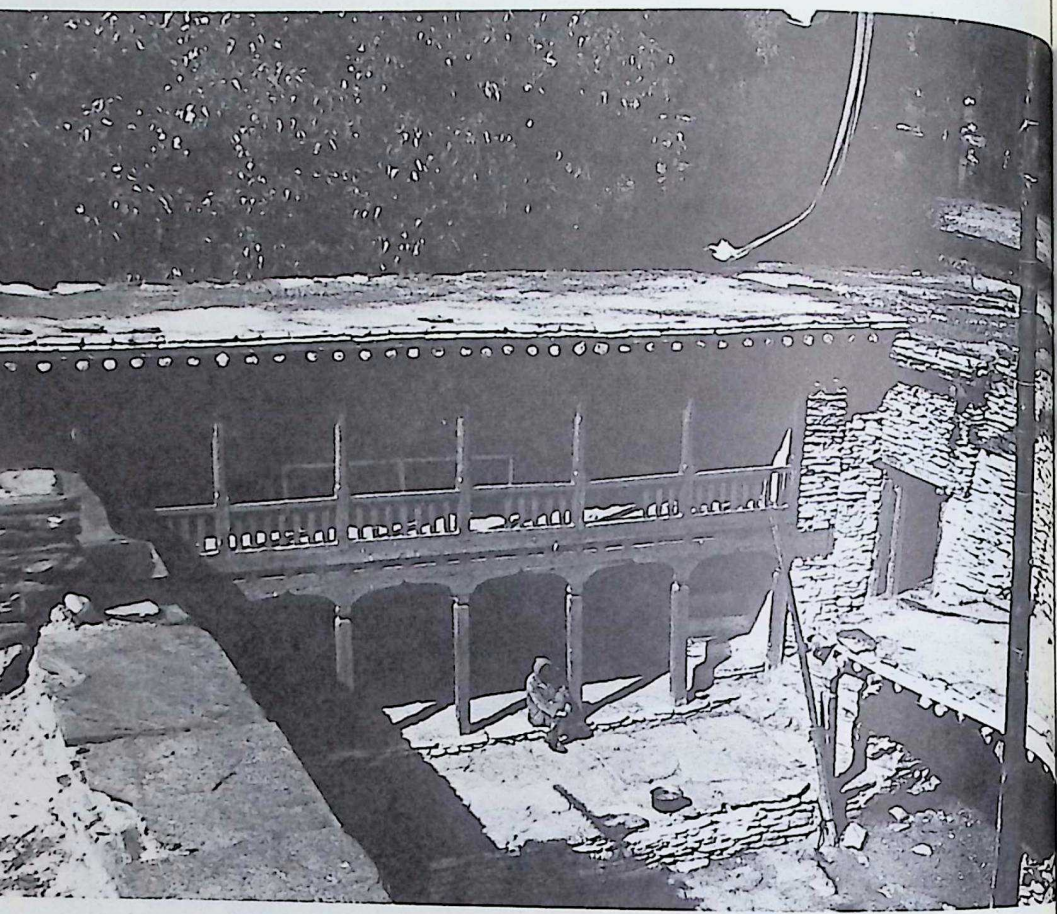

Fig. 45.
Cherok. Monastery: north-east side of the courtyard.

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Fig. 46.
Cherok. Monastery: altar in the assembly hall.

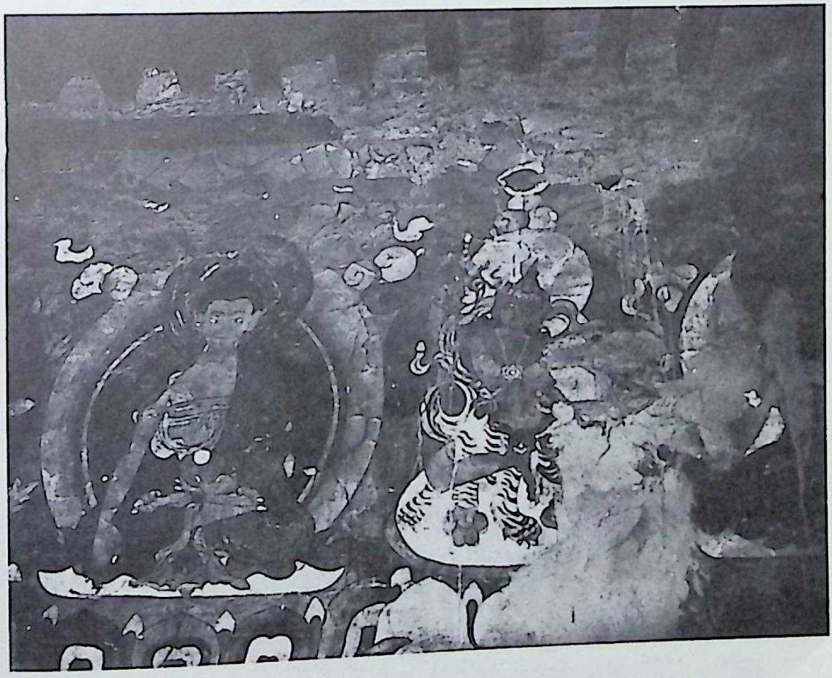

Fig. 47.
Cherok. Monastery: detail of mural painting.

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Fig. 48.
Cherok. Monastery: detail of altar.

Fig. 49.
Cherok. Statue of Padmasambhava in the side chapel.

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Temples of the Sindhu-Palchock District

In the Sindhu-Palchock District, the small area of Helambu, or Yolmo in the local Tibetan dialect, lies to the north-east of the valley of Kathmandu. It contains a series of temples usually associated with the founding clans. They are temple-houses quite distinct from such more recent buildings as, for example, the village temple of Tarkegyang, rebuilt in 1969, which does not follow the local model and for which foreign building materials were used.

The villages are located on the mountain slopes in groups of five to ten houses. In Gangkharka and Tarkegyang the houses are pressed close to one another and built in rows along the altitude line. These villages are certainly the oldest in Helambu. Several villages are located on a ridge running south-north along the Ganjala Range, and the region is bounded by the rivers Melamchi on the west and the Indrawati on the east. Helambu comprises traditionally '500 households'.

In contrast with the Humla and Mustang Districts, the monsoon is a dominating feature in Helambu, which is one of the regions of Nepal where rainfall is the heaviest, in summer as high as 2,000 mm.

Helambu was a 'hidden valley' and considered sacred. It was 'opened' by Lama Ra-chan Ca-kya bzang-po, who came from Tibet. Prior to Lama Ra-chan's arrival, Saint Milarepa is said to have spent a period of his life meditating in a cave near Tarkegyang.

The inhabitants of Helambu call themselves Sherpa. They are of Tibetan stock, anthropologically and culturally. This society is divided into a number of exogamic lineages. Until recently marriage outside the group was not only unusual but practically impossible. There seems to be general agreement about the origin of the Helambu lineages. Their ancestors came from Kyirong in southern Tibet, a five-day walk away.

The members of the community are all followers of the Nying-ma-pa sect and religion seems to be 'a family affair'. The lamas lead a secular life. Religious instruction is given by a relative.

An important religious development took place in 1935 with the creation of the monastery of Bagang by the Bhutanese lama Sherab Dorje of the Drug-pa Ka-gyü-pa sect. This lama spent his life building temples, monasteries and monumental prayer-wheels in Tibet (Kyirong), Bhutan and Nepal (Tsum, Bagang and Bigu).

Another important event happened in 1959 when Tibetans,

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mainly lamas, left Tibet and settled in the border districts of the Nepalese Himalayas. Helambu was one of the places where they could find shelter in Buddhist communities whose language was similar to theirs.

The village temples, called *Gyang* in local dialect and the Tamang language, are under the direction of a head lama, known as the *Tika* Lama. He is a married village priest and is assisted in the running of the Gyang by a group of villagers, the *Goba* ('headmen'). The office of the *Tika* Lama is hereditary, the line of inheritance being from father to eldest son. Within these hereditary lineages the male offspring are referred to as 'clan lamas'.

In some cases the villages grew up around the temple. Whereas the early *Gyang* were originally given *guthi*, land grants, by the Malla and Shah kings to provide for their upkeep, the later ones are supported by the villagers themselves.

Lhakhang Gyang

Lhakhang Gyang is a village temple situated in one of the most beautiful parts of the whole region. It is set on a north-eastern slope at an altitude of 2,800 m, against a background of a fine forest and overlooking the valley of the Indrawati, known as the Ripar valley. The temple has a few scattered chörten and mani-walls around it and the ruins of a village abandoned two generations ago and moved to another site lower down the valley. The weather conditions in this valley are extremely inclement and there are at least six months of mist, rain and snow, the latter often falling to a depth of one metre.

It is the temple of the villages of Gangkharka (thirty-eight houses) and Pangthang (twelve houses). Lama Sarki is in charge of the ritual. The structure follows a typical Sherpa pattern: when one faces the main façade the temple is to the left of the attached caretaker's house. The walls are of split stone that is random coursed, bedded in mud mortar and set on a low platform. The cross wall is of a similar construction. The main entrances to the temple and the living quarters are on the south. Windows and doors open on to the east but the two remaining walls are blank. The roof coverings are wood shingles laid on split battens which are set on unhewn purlins. The portico gives access through a double door to a chapel. Some time during its construction some alteration appears to have been made to it. The original opening must have been much wider and this has recently been half bricked; also the supporting pillars and brackets are all of different styles.

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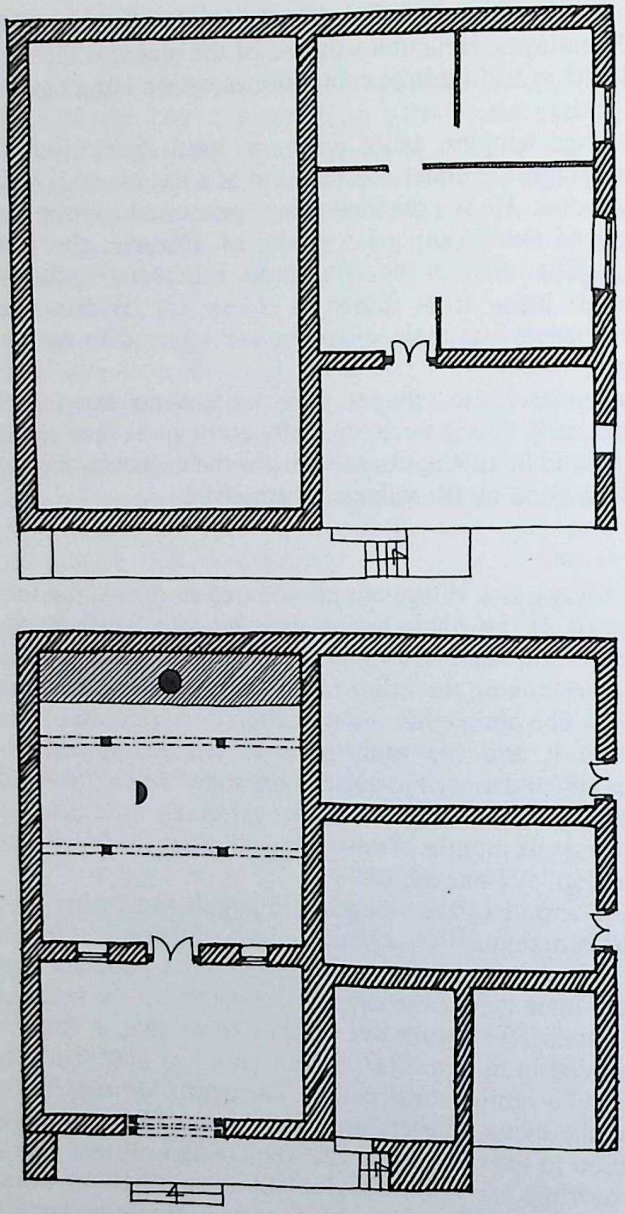

Fig. 50. Lhakhang Gyang (Sindhu-Palchock District). Village temple. Plan of ground and first floors.

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Fig. 51.
Lhakhang Gyang. Foreground, prayer-wall and chörten; centre, building that formerly housed the pilgrimage kitchen.

The chapel interior, which is finely decorated with murals, pillars, brackets and carved and painted beams, follows the traditional plan of four central pillars supporting a painted ceiling and with the altar on the wall opposite the entrance door. On the altar, built against the wall facing the entrance, there are statues of Padmasambhava and the founder lama, Drug Tenzing Ngawang Namgyal.

The dwelling consists of a storage room, a kitchen and quarters for pilgrims on the ground floor and on the first floor the caretaker's living quarters, which are set behind a large projecting verandah opening to the south. The quarters consist of a guest room, kitchen, living room and the caretaker's bedroom.

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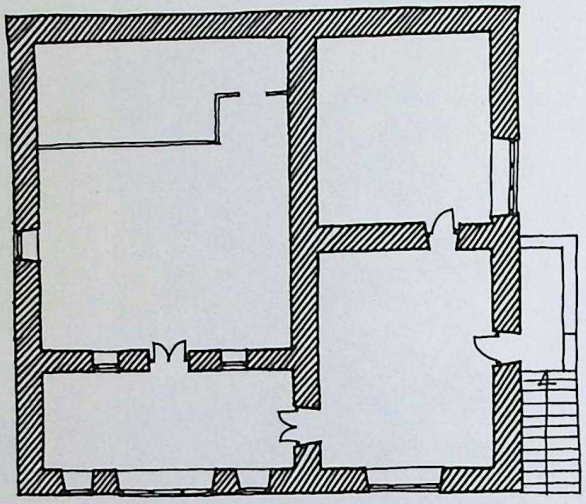

Fig. 52.
Chure Gyang (Sindhu-Palchock District). Village temple. Plan of the ground and first floors (by F. Morillon and P. Thouveny, 1977).

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The temple of Chure Gyang

The temple of Chure Gyang, of particular historic interest, is situated about ten minutes' walk below the village of Tarkegyang. It is set on an east-facing slope in a small forest.

This temple is considered to be one of the oldest in the region of Helambu. It was founded by Lama Nagtsang Sakya Zangpo (sNag-chang Sha-kya bzang po) at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Although partly damaged by the 1934 earthquake, the upper storey has been rebuilt; the chapel and the artefacts in it are some of the oldest and finest. The building is larger than the usual private temple and has a secondary chapel above the main hall. It conforms to the standard layout with the lamas dwelling on the right side of the temple.

The walls are constructed of split stone. The front elevation contains carved windows obviously brought from Kathmandu, as were the decorated porch frames. A window on the east wall gives light to the dwelling on the first floor.

The exterior walls are whitewashed and the roof is of wooden shingles.

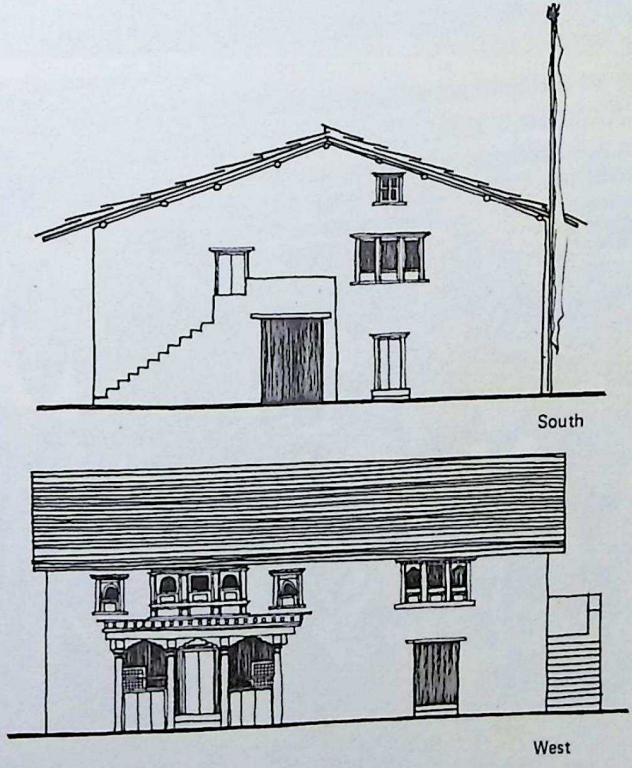

Fig. 53. Chure Gyang. Temple, southern and western façades (by F. Morillon and P. Thouveny, 1977).

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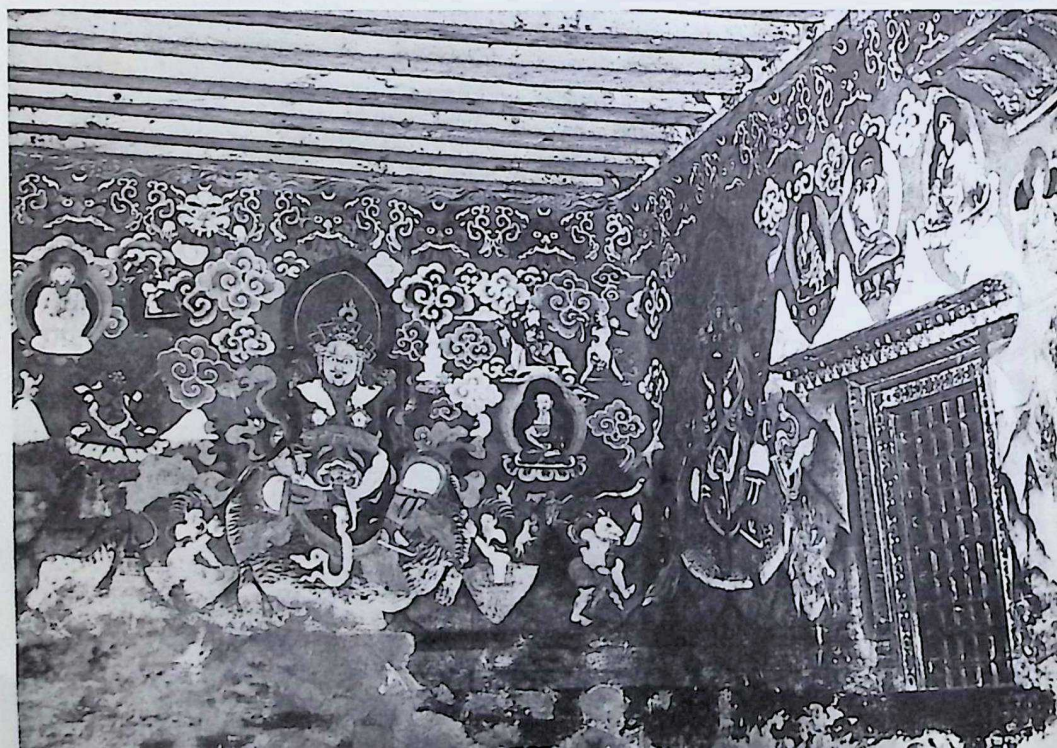

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Fig. 54.
Chure Gyang.
Ceiling of the
portico.

The interior of the temple, which is accessible through an open porch, is a well-proportioned room with fine decorations and carvings on the central pillars and brackets above.

On the altar there are statues of Padmasambhava (the head was made in Tibet), Vajrapani and the lama who founded the temple.

The whole building is set on a one-metre high platform. In front there is a small flagged courtyard with a collection of religious banners and a spring.

The temple of Tarkegyang

The temple of Tarkegyang, 'the temple of the 100 horses', was established around 1727 by Lama Nyima Senge. He was a lama from Kyirong and received land from the Newar king Jaya Jagatjaya Malla of Kantipur (Kathmandu) in return for stopping an epidemic in 1723. A biography of Lama Nyima Senge gives more information about the foundation of this temple.

A long time ago an epidemic broke out in the Kathmandu Valley, in Yerang (Patan). The Newar king finally called a lama who was said to have great powers. Lama Nyima Senge of the Ten-gi Ling-pa lineage performed the *sku-rim* ceremony and the epidemic stopped at once. The king wanted to reward the lama and asked what was his wish. The lama asked for a hundred horses and took them to a place which was called from then on Tarke: 'the 100 horses'. The lama's wife suggested that he also ask for land as there was not enough pasture land for the horses. The lama went to the king and asked for land, and was given a place called Lang-ri gya-sa.

Fig. 55.
Chure Gyang. Wall
paintings of the
temple portico.
Guardian divinities
of the four quarters.

This lama first established a hermitage on the ridge called Yangri-ma above the present village of Tarkegyang and a few years later built a shrine of some importance. The present temple was rebuilt in 1969 and follows what is locally called the 'Bhutanese' style with two-tiered roofs capped with a small pinnacle, the entrance porch being protected by a canopy.

The structure stands on a low platform, protected by the overhanging roof. It has two storeys (exterior dimensions: 16.40 × 12 m). The walls are built of local stone and are externally plastered and whitewashed. Window, door and porch frames are of timber. The roof is covered with corrugated sheeting.

The upper structure rests on four pillars supporting the intersecting beams. The internal walls of the porch, assembly hall and chapel are plastered and painted. These paintings have been coated with a poor quality varnish.

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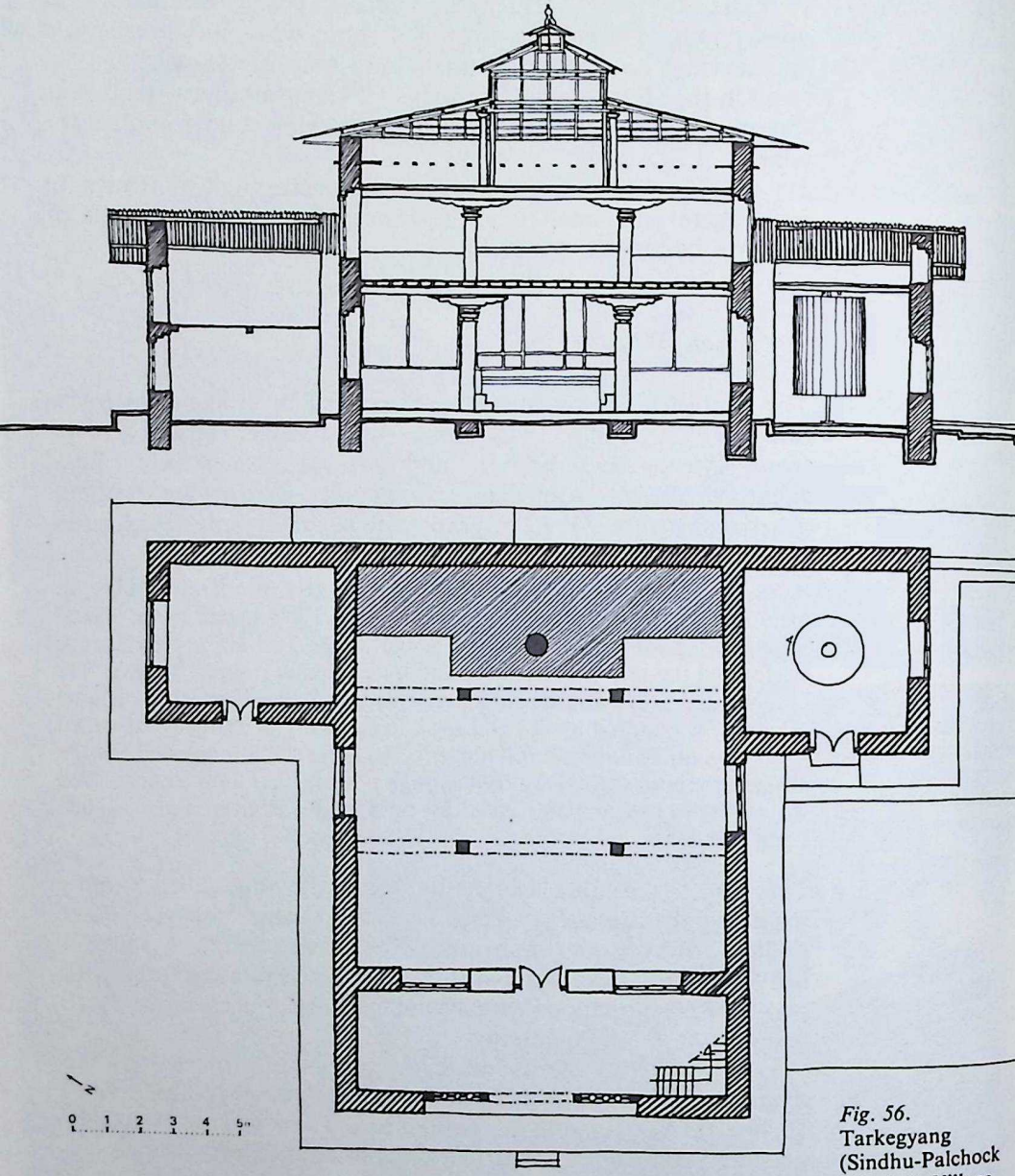

Fig. 56. Tarkegyang (Sindhu-Palchock District). Village temple: cross-section and ground-floor plan (by F. Morillon and P. Thouveny, 1977).

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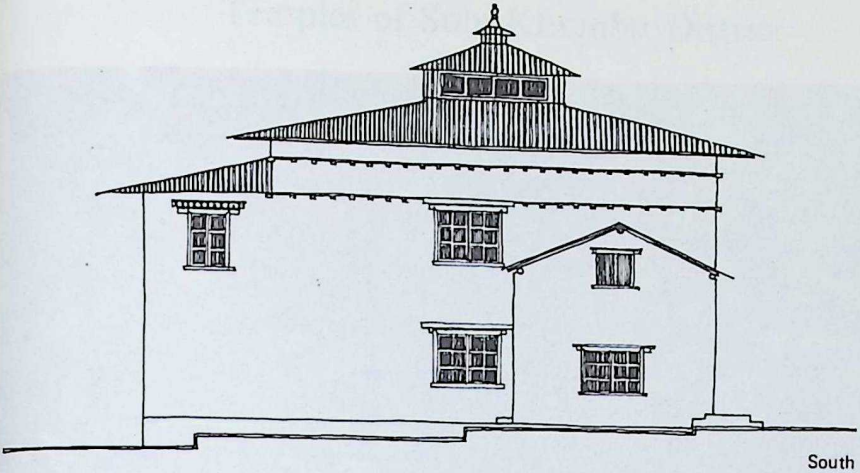
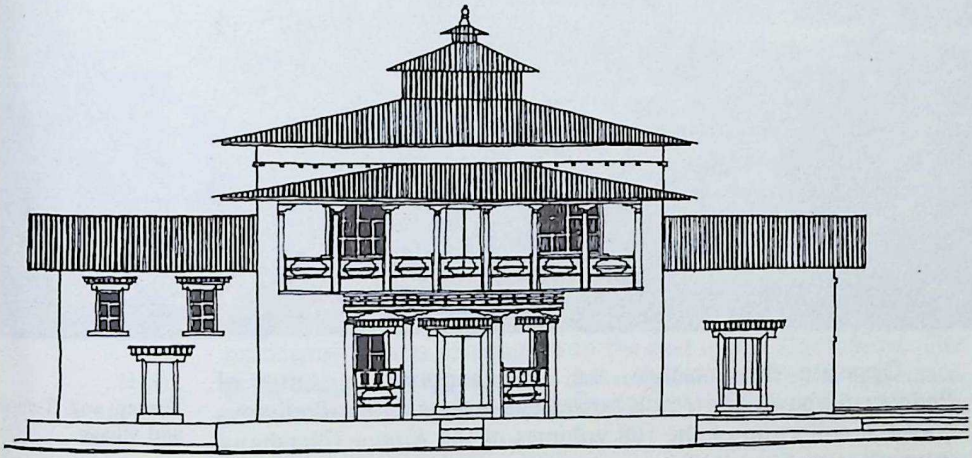


South



West

0 1 2 3 4 5m

Fig. 57.
Tarkegyang. Village temple: southern and western façades (by F. Morillon and P. Thouveny, 1977).

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Fig. 58. Tarkegyang. Temple and village.

Opposite the entrance, the altar supports a statue of Padmasambhava. The temple possesses a series a series of religious books, a collection of the 108 volumes of the *Kanjur* (Narthang imprint).

In front of the temple there is a space where prayer flags are erected. At the south side a big prayer-wheel has been set up in a separate building.

There is hardly a building in the District of Sindhu-Palchock that does not suffer from the effects of humidity and lack of maintenance. Most buildings show the effects of earthquakes.

Rapid salvaging action should be taken in this region, linked with a training programme in restoration for the religious community.

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Temples of Solu-Khumbu District

The Solu-Khumbu District comprises three regions: Khumbu, Pharak and Solu. Khumbu fans out round the Everest Massif from the Chinese border to the south of the confluence of the Dudh Kosi and the Bothe Kosi. The small region of Pharak is immediately south of Khumbu, and lower still Solu (in Sherpa: Shorung) encompasses the valley of the Solu river.

The local economy is based on the breeding of yak and its hybrids and on potato-growing, but these resources are not enough to make the inhabitants self-sufficient throughout the year. In recent years, tourism has brought extra resources.

Namche Bazar (Nawoche), Khumjung and Khunde are located between the Dudh Kosi and the Bhote Kosi: Phortse is in the upper Dudh Kosi Valley, Pangboche and Dingboche are located in the Imja Khola, while in the upper Bhote Kosi are located Tramo, Thame and Thameteng. Namche Bazar has become fairly important since the expansion of tourism.

The dwellings are built on a rectangular plan with stone walls, usually double-storeyed. The roofs in two sections are covered with shingles held down with big stones. In some houses there is a chapel with an altar an panelled walls decorated with paintings. Temples and religious buildings as well as shrines and prayer-wheels are found in all the villages.

Sherpa tradition says that the Sherpas immigrated from eastern Tibet between 400 and 500 years ago and some clans settled in the Khumbu area at that time. More recently there have been important migrations within Nepal so that there are numerous Sherpa settlements to the east of the Dudh Kosi. The progressive development of the religious movement and institutions has for a long time occurred in direct liaison with Tibetan monasteries.

The Sherpas have a clear sense of distinct identity that sets them apart from the other high-altitude dwellers of Tibetan stock along the main Himalayan range.

A village constitutes a community of families, linked by kinship, which makes it possible to take concerted action for the general organization of the agro-pastoral and religious activities. Today the panchayat system has replaced the former system of village administration based on the principle that all authority is delegated to officials elected for a limited period of time. These panchayat members can, however, still call public meetings to discuss the more important problems.

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The villagers participate in the religious festivals which are celebrated in the village temple. The officials of the temple are responsible for the organization of the ceremonies, for the administration of the temple funds and income and for the maintenance of the buildings. In strict rotation, the householders have specific tasks to perform during the religious ceremonies. According to C. von Fürer-Haimendorf, 'Buddhist thought and practice has gradually permeated the Sherpa way of life; the pattern of behaviour and the moral precepts characteristic of Tibetan Buddhist civilization govern the conduct of both wordly and spiritual affairs'.

According to local tradition, the foundation of the oldest settlements in Khumbu is ascribed to Lama Sanga Dorje (*gsang-ba rdo-rje*) who in his twelfth incarnation was the head lama of the Dza Rongphu (*rdza-rong-phu*) monastery north of Mount Everest. Lama Sanga Dorje, who founded the temples of Pangboche, Kyirog and Rimishung, is considered the patron of Khumbu; he left many traces of his presence during his stay in Tengboche, Pangboche and Dingboche. (His remains, eyes, tongue and heart, are enshrined in a silver casket preserved in Pangboche temple).

Seasonal and domestic rituals are performed in the village temples by the lamas, who may have been novices for some time in one of the monasteries. Once a year they practise seclusion and meditation in a hermitage in the region. D. A. Snellgrove, in *Buddhist Himalaya,* points out that the establishment of monasteries in Solu as well as in Khumbu is a recent phenomenon.

The most important monasteries are Tengboche and Thame in the Khumbu region. Tengboche was founded in 1923 by Lama Gulu, who only devoted himself to religion at an advanced age. He studied in Tibet and settled in Khumjung before starting the building of the monastic complex in Tengboche. The temple collapsed during the 1934 earthquake and Lama Gulu died shortly after.

It was rebuilt with the help of the villagers of Khumbu. Since its foundation, many young men have come to the monastery to be initiated. Some left to take up secular occupations. In 1930 Lama Gulu founded, also in Deboche, a settlement for nuns situated half-an-hour's walk from Tengboche.

The second monastery in importance in Khumbu is located in Thame. In 1920, Lama Tundu, a descendant of a line of lamas from Thame, built the monastery above the village of Thame Og.

In Solu, monastic institutions were created in Jiwong, Takshindo, Tolaka, Kole Thodung and, recently, in Nopung near Junbeśi.

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The temple of Pangboche

The trail from Tengboche to Pangboche runs north along the Imja Khola through a forest of juniper and rhododendrons. As one approaches Pangboche the inhabitants' religious fervour is demonstrated in an increasing number of chörten, prayer-walls, carved rocks and prayer-flags. The village is divided into two groups of houses, one at 3,900 m and the other at 4,000 m. Below the temple terraced fields reach down to the river. The houses are built at the same height as the temple or below it.

According to tradition, Pangboche was founded by Lama Sanga Dorje, and local cultural and religious history is closely related to the life of this lama, who was responsible for the spread of the Buddhist religion in the Khumbu region. The development of Pangboche is also connected with that of the settlements of Thame, Rimijung and Kirog, since according to local tradition these were the first major settlements in this region of the Himalayas. The presence of Lama Sanga Dorje is once again manifested by the imprints of his hands and feet as well as by the religious motifs he traced on the surrounding rocks.

At the beginning Pangboche was a monastery with seven religious dwellings. It was only afterwards that it became a settlement. It consists today of sixty houses. Above the village, at about 200 m, there are six hermitages facing south just under the peak of Tawoche, the protective divinity of Pangboche.

The temple is a two-storeyed building facing south-east; in front it has a courtyard with wooden two-storeyed arcades. Access to the courtyard is through the doors either to the east or west. The building itself is set about one metre off the ground and a flight of steps leads to the portico, formed by a lintel supported by two pillars.

The walls are constructed of random stone set in a mud mortar. The western wall is built into the side of the mountain and only about three metres of it are exposed. It contains five windows, two at the lower level and three at the upper level. The east wall is blank and up against it is set the Mani dungyur; the main south elevation contains the large entrance porch.

The upper floor rests on beams that are supported by brackets and columns. The lantern is also supported by four pillars with brackets carved in the form of sea monsters.

A double-door opens on to the rectangular-shaped chapel. The altar is set against the north-west wall. The general layout of the chapel is of the traditional pattern with four pillars supporting the upper structure and a lantern.

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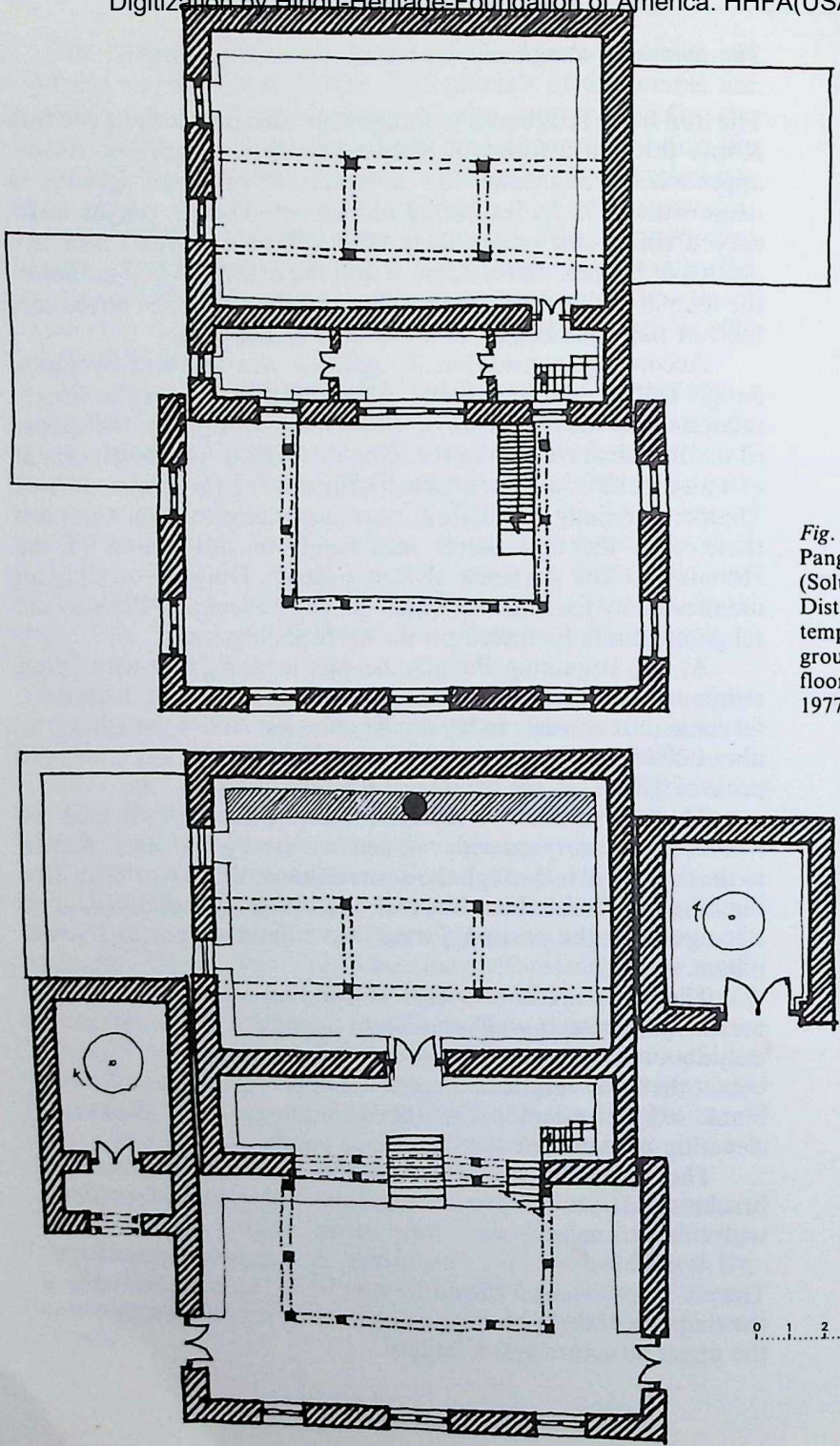

Fig. 59. Pangboche Gompa (Solu-Khumbu District). Village temple. Plan of ground and first floors (by W. Korn, 1977).

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At the eastern corner of the porch a staircase leads to the gallery on the first floor which gives access to a panelled chapel containing statues of Guru Rinpoche, Tsepame and two statues of the lama of Pangboche; on either side there are religious texts, including the *Kanjur*, on the shelves. The paintings were executed about thirty years ago. To complete this description, mention should be made of a 'Yeti skull and hand' as well as other religious objects which belonged to Lama Sanga Dorje.

The temple of Kyangmo Lhakhang (Chauri Kharkha)

This private chapel is located on the main trail from Lukla to Namche Bazar. Chauri Kharkha is a large natural terrace to the west of the trail and the chapel is on a raised piece of ground surrounded by erratic boulders. The temple is a two-storey building with the main chapel on the ground floor beneath the owners' dwellings.

The chapel is reached through an open porch on the south, and the altar faces the entrance on the north wall. The chapel (10.80 × 8.20 m) is of typical layout with a grid of four pillars supporting the structure above. It is lit by single windows on the east and the west. Access to the dwelling above is up steps built on

Fig. 60. Kyangmo (Solu-Khumbu District). Private temple: eastern façade.

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the western side. The wooden window frames are joined by means of tenons, a type of construction usually found only in older buildings.

The temple was built about 100 years ago. In the centre of the altar there is a statue of Guru Rinpoche flanked by racks containing the *Kanjur*. On the eastern side there are two large statues of Jamyang and Guru Rinpoche. The pillars and consoles are of interesting design and execution. This temple was constructed by Lama Kuntu. The present owner, aged 49, is the grandson of the founder. He has been given a religious education and is now responsible for the ceremonies.

The monastery of Jiwong

The monastery of Jiwong (*Spyi-dbang*) is situated on the spur of the Kemche Danda at an altitude of 3,000 m commanding a magnificent view over the Solu valley. It backs on to a ridge reaching an altitude of 3,500 m near a forest of fir and rhododendron.

At the highest level on the slope the main temple, a school of theology and the monks' quarters are situated; below are another temple, the Mani Lhakhang, a private chapel and the nuns' dwellings.

The monastic complex is surrounded by an encircling wall with an entrance gate and a chörten. It is of the temple-courtyard type with the main entrance facing south. The courtyard is reached up a staircase and through a big portico, with rooms used as cattle sheds on either side. The upper level of the courtyard has a gallery along three sides where the faithful stand during important ceremonies. On the east side two large rooms serve as the communal kitchen and the monks' refectory. Access to the temple is up a flight of steps. A large door opens on to the assembly hall (11 × 15 m), which is decorated with fine murals and contains on shelves the volumes of the *Kanjur* and *Tenjur*. (D. A. Snellgrove gives a detailed description in his *Buddhist Himalaya*, p. 219.) On the north side of the hall there is a shrine on a raised platform, concealed by a screen.

The ceiling over the platform is raised higher than that of the main ceiling and topped by a further construction with pillars and a lintel carrying the roof.

The ground floor is covered with short lengths of boards spanning exposed bearers. An air space is left below the floor. The floor of the platform is constructed in the same way.

The walls are plastered from floor to ceiling and are

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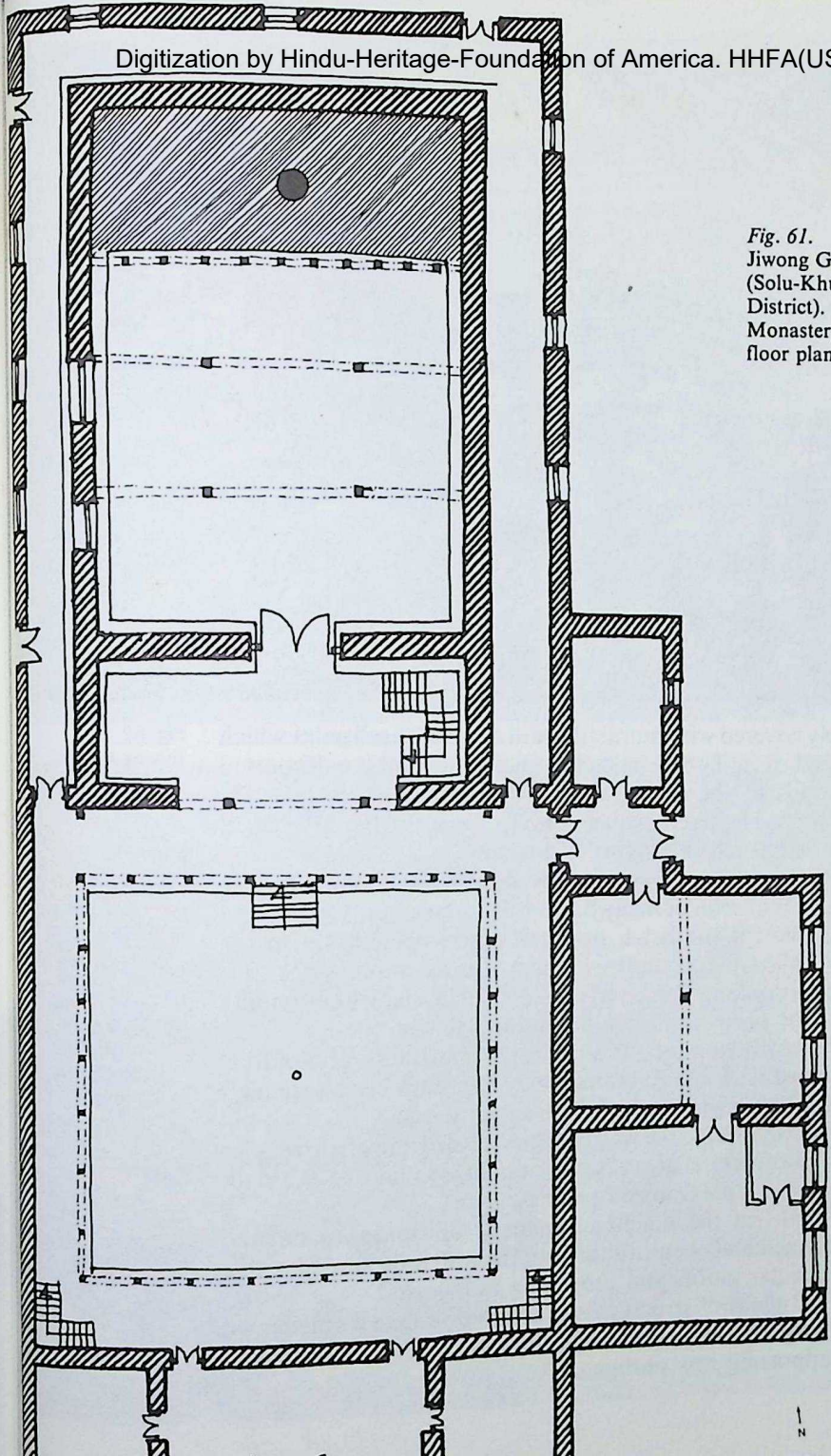

Fig. 61.
Jiwong Gompa (Solu-Khumbu District).
Monastery: ground-floor plan.

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completely covered with murals done in a water-based paint which is varnished over. Three walls of the assembly hall are decorated but the walls of the shrine are fitted with shelves to take the religious texts. The screen wall is in trellis-work and there is a small centrally placed recess for further images.

On the upper level, reached by a staircase in the entrance porch, there is a series of finely decorated rooms, a big chapel, and a living room for the lama, with the centre opening on to the assembly hall. On the south side a decorated room leads to a balcony overlooking the courtyard. A small chapel containing images of the protective divinities adjoins this room.

The construction follows a typical form with the grid of four pillars capped with brackets that carry the main beams running east-west; these beams support the ceiling joists.

As an extension to the wall of the courtyard and on three sides of the temple an ambulatory has been built, so that one can walk round; it has simple framed openings.

The walls of the building are made of stones set in mud mortar. Immediately beneath the roof the wall is decorated with a band of circular motifs and projecting false joists.

In 1973 the roof structure was adapted to take a corrugated iron covering. A complicated framework was made with four main trusses supporting new purlins.

Fig. 62. Jiwong Gompa. Temple and houses of the monks.

Fig. 63. Jiwong Gompa. Courtyard of the temple.

Fig. 64. Jiwong Gompa. Murals on the upper floor of the galleries overlooking the outer court.

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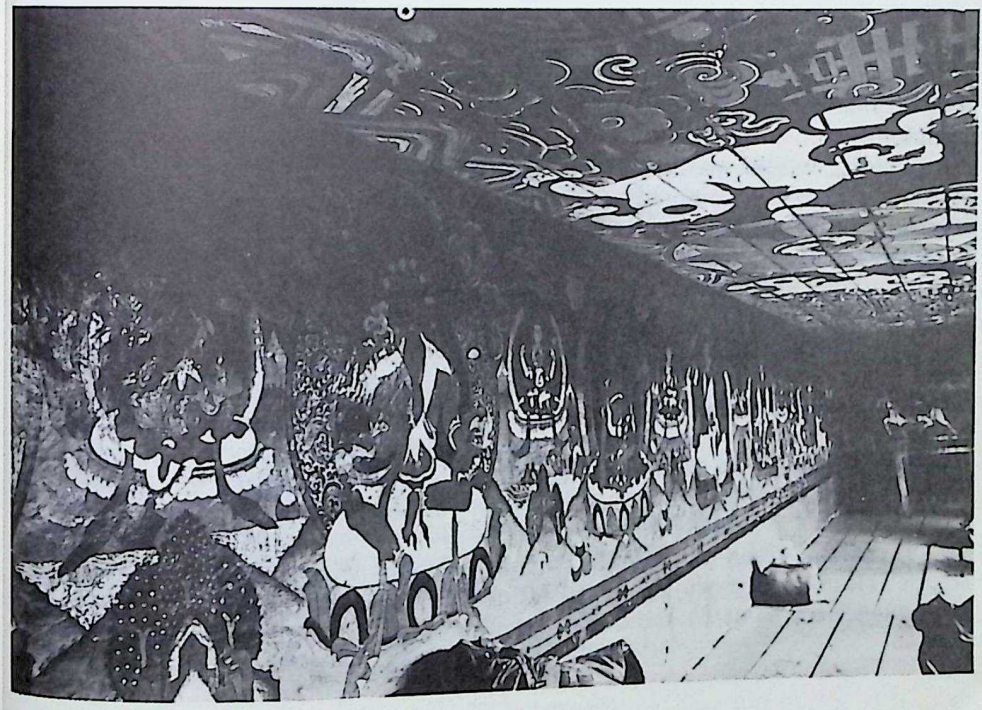

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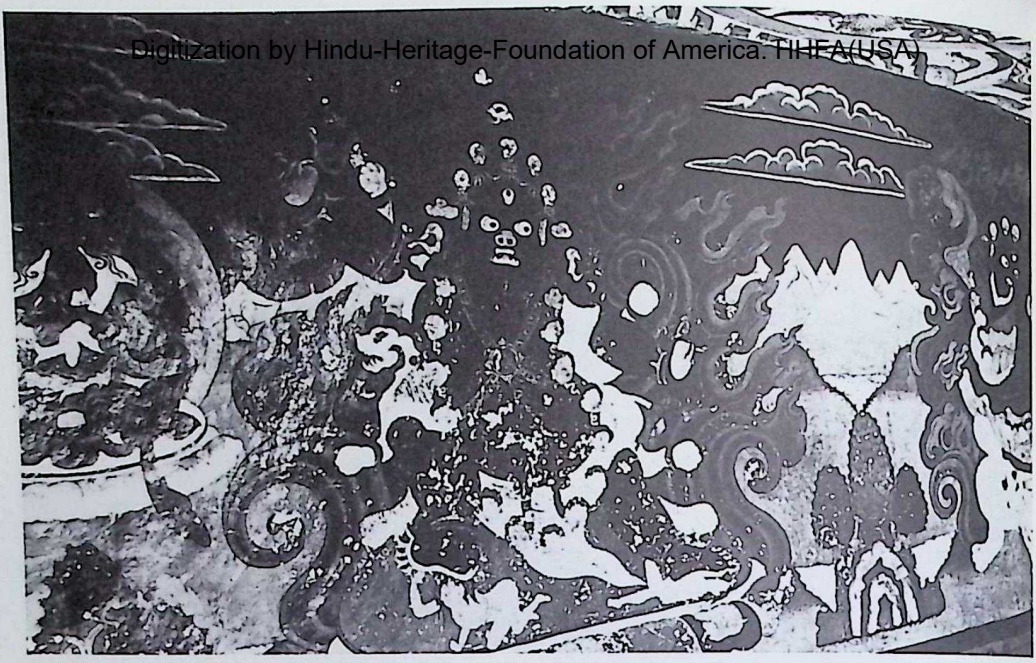

Fig. 65.
Jiwong Gompa. Murals on the upper floor of the galleries overlooking the outer court.

Jiwong monastery as it stands today was founded in 1923 by a rich Sherpa, Lama Sangye, who endowed it with lands and cattle to provide an annual income. At its peak it had fifty monks. Today this number has dwindled to ten, and one has the impression that there is neither guidance nor interest, so the monastery is in a very bad state. The school of theology no longer functions. About half of the monks' dwellings are in a state of collapse. The monks claim that they have no support from benefactors or the surrounding community.

Jiwong, which needs not only technical and financial assistance from the communities, could become a nucleus of cultural interest to visitors if the religious life is maintained.

The traditional life-style and culture of the inhabitants of the Solu Khumbu region are slowly being undermined by the pressure of tourism and 'Western influence'. The Sherpas' natural tendency to follow a lucrative trade and the adventure-seeking tourists who have come to find beautiful scenery and an unusual way of life set a problem that has to be resolved, particularly with regard to the religious buildings and their communities. If these people suffer rapid and uncontrolled Westernization, their culture will quickly disappear.

The Solu Khumbu District is a 'test zone' where the responsible authorities should closely follow developments, as we have suggested, so as to avoid both a cultural and a material decline.

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Suggestions for the conservation of northern Nepalese monuments and sites

The preceding accounts underline the problems that must be solved in the field of conservation and promotion of northern Nepal's cultural heritage.

The behaviour of men imbued with Buddhist philosophy, the limitations imposed by an exceptional ecological milieu, and the priorities to be respected in a developing country narrow down the choice of operations.

Moreover it is an accepted principle that the preservation of a cultural heritage should never be an obstacle in the struggle for better living conditions.

Responsibility for cultural matters rests with the village chiefs and the clergy. The maintenance work on monuments, however, is undertaken only occasionally. More often than not repairs are made only when a building is on the brink of total collapse. In recent years, interest in the preservation of old buildings has declined. In some cases, it may accompany the forsaking of religious practices.

In the autumn of 1978, during a conversation with the abbot of the Tengboche monastery, we suggested various solutions for the preservation of the monastery. He replied, 'But what is the use of a building in perfect condition when there are no priests to celebrate divine services?'

Operations should be undertaken at various levels. It is not for us to intervene in the field of religion. The religious circles themselves are moreover seeking a solution. The abbot of Tengboche has advocated the creation of a Buddhist theological school at Kathmandu.

The recommendations made here concern only the inventory of the buildings and their conservation.

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The most important aspect of preservation activities, although it is not easily quantifiable, is that of changing mental habits; in other words, the conversion of those in authority to a new psychological *modus operandi*. This is an arduous task because the only direct means is by human contacts and the 'missionary' spirit of the people in charge of the work. The problem is that of persuading the authorities to accept the concept of conservation, which is an entirely new concept in a developing country.

The following recommendations for the protection of northern Nepal's cultural heritage take into account the results of the Helambu and Solu Khumbu missions in 1976 and 1977.

First, the creation of a unit to make an inventory of the cultural property. The unit should include an architect specialized in restoration, an epigrapher, a specialist in the humanities (history and ethnology), a photographer specialized in photographing mural paintings.

The unit's work will consist in the pursuance of a systematic inventory of cultural property in all the districts of northern Nepal. (An attempt in this direction has already been made by sending out questionnaires requesting a description of each site, its history, and an account of its present condition.)

For each monument and each site a considered statement of facts is essential in order to draw up guidelines for the restoration (see Appendix 1, setting forth the observations to be made and giving advice on the repairs to be done, and Appendix 2, containing an inventory index card for movable objects in temples, chapels and private houses.)

The unit should also compile a list of the craftsmen belonging to the various corporations, by region and by groups of villages. These craftsmen will be needed for repair work and they could also promote local production of objects likely to interest tourists.

Second, the constitution of a special team to intervene in matters related to the maintenance and restoration of imperilled monuments. In some regions, protective measures should be taken immediately, particularly where buildings need to be protected from rain, or movable objects safeguarded from theft or pillage, the most vulnerable being paintings, statues and books.

Should the Nepalese Government consider it worthwhile, a single monument might be selected in each district for restoration by specialists so as to serve as an example to be followed.

Periodical inspection tours would also fall within the

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responsibilities of the team, which could advise the local authorities after examining with them the problems to be solved.

Third, the establishment of a permanent consultative bureau where local authorities and chiefs of districts could obtain the assistance and co-operation of specialists—architects, restorers, etc.

Fourth, the organization of a campaign aimed at making the responsible authorities, the general public and the inhabitants of the northern regions aware of conservation problems by means of the press and radio, exhibitions and lectures.

Seminars on the theme of conservation and restoration might be organized. The 'Lama Desh Darśan' Seminar, for example, has convened annually fifty to eighty lamas and members of the Panchayats from some twenty districts of northern Nepal since 1972. This seminar is held in the winter (December-January) and lasts a week. It gives officials of the Home and Panchayat Ministry of Nepal an opportunity to show all interested visitors not only the pilgrimage centres but also what has been achieved in the way of infrastructure and the use of modern technology. This seminar has already had useful results. Its members visited the Hanuman Dhoka Palace, the restoration of which is being carried out by the Government of Nepal and Unesco.

In this same spirit, an exhibition presenting the cultural heritage of Nepal—and especially the northern temples (districts of Mustang, Sindhu-Palchock and Humla) was organized in January 1979 with the co-operation of the Nepalese Department of Archaeology. During audio-visual sessions, the different problems of restoration and conservation were broached and illustrated.

In future, the seminar organized by the Home and Panchayat Ministry could discuss the utilization of new building materials, with their advantages and pitfalls; the protection of wooden structures; mural paintings, etc.

Fifth, close liaison should exist between the preservation specialists and the tourism authorities. Indeed, the monuments of northern Nepal are nearly always set in an exceptionally beautiful landscape. Buddhism and the environment are the two poles of attraction for cultural tourism. Mass tourism, however, has its dangers, and safeguarding cultural property without restricting the flow of visitors has today become an urgent problem and demands thought.

It would be useful to train some villagers as guides.

Sixth, the legislation specified in the *Master Plan for the*

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Conservation of the Cultural Heritage in the Kathmandu Valley should be extended to the cultural heritage of northern Nepal with appropriate modifications. Some of the temples could be listed as 'national monuments' and taken over by the government. Such a procedure, which has already been adopted in several countries (for example in Japan), would not be easily accepted by the local authorities in spite of their awareness of the problem. On the other hand, if tourists are sufficiently well-informed, it might induce a change in their attitude towards works of art which are often remarkable.

In the past the location of villages and the structure of the buildings were determined by what one might call 'natural laws'. Buildings were often grouped together for protection. They were oriented for maximum exposure to the sun and complied with the necessity of keeping all arable areas free.

Today it is becoming increasingly expensive to build in the 'traditional' style with local materials and to employ highly qualified craftsmen. Unfortunately, the first attempts at building with cheaper and more resistant materials have failed and led to the rapid disappearance of traditions and the destruction of the environment.

It should be noted that the dynamic energy and practical side of the enterprising and active mountain populations have made them impatient to use new materials (corrugated iron, cement, nails) while completely overlooking their possible drawbacks.

Although corrugated iron is both fire and water resistant and will soon replace shingles, and although the use of cement reduces the bulk of the walls and makes them impervious to humidity, these recently introduced materials are employed inexpertly, without knowledge of the proper methods and very often without due consideration for traditional forms. The resulting effects are regrettable. Workmanship has also lost its quality of a fine handicraft, and the workers themselves have not yet received the training they need to adopt the new techniques.

Changes will inevitably be brought about by the attraction of novelty, the scarcity of wood for construction purposes and of qualified manpower, as well as the rapid increase in the demand for more comfortable buildings in a new style (which implies fitting windows, better thermal insulation, etc.). New forms will of necessity appear. Nor can the religious monuments evade these considerations, which in their case deserve special attention.

Tourism in Nepal is bound to develop, and some economists do not hesitate to predict that a sizeable revenue will be derived from this sector.

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In 1977, 120,000 tourists visited Nepal, and 25,000 of them visited the northern regions, which are of great cultural interest.

Whether one wants it or not, industry is going to 'exploit' the cultural resources; all the more so as Buddhism in its Tibetan form has always elicited curiosity and sympathy. Temples and sanctuaries are being opened to tourists, and some caretakers even place collecting-boxes in a prominent position for offerings to help maintain the buildings. In some of the more isolated places, however, the insistence of indiscreet visitors arouses suspicion, and sometimes dishonest guides lead to hostile reactions.

One should never lose sight of these indirect effects of tourism, which may be good or bad. Priests have been seen selling ritual objects and old women pages from a book (which means that the book has been destroyed).

Yet not all aspects are negative by any means. Stimulated by tourist interest in 'souvenir articles', the villagers have begun to engrave religious formulas on shale plaques, while some of them, despite the fact that they are laymen, are painting *thangkas*. Although these objects are made to be sold, they develop handicrafts derived directly from religious expression.

We have a right to wonder what is to become of this culture in which religion and the ways of daily life are so intricately linked. Periodic renewals of interest in religious life and religious observance have always characterized Nepal. Proof of this is to be found in biographies of holy lamas written in past centuries. A learned monk settles in a certain place, attracts disciples, starts or revives a religious community. Then, as the need arises, new buildings are erected with everyone participating. Work, offerings, or the presentation of a child who will one day become a priest, are all expressions of deep faith. Even today, this pattern of behaviour is not rare. During the past twenty years, moreover, priests from the north have been settling in the high valleys, where their influence on local religious life is evident.

In this respect, attention should be drawn to the role of Kusho Tsechu in Nepal. He is a monk, born in Kyirong and educated in Bhutan, who has lived in Kathmandu for over thirty years. A follower of Lama Sherab Dorje, the founder of various monasteries in Nepal, he has made himself responsible for the Drug-pa Ka-gÿu-pa order in Tsum as well as in Helambu; he has encouraged the teaching of religion and has built or restored temples.

A dedicated intermediary between isolated communities and the royal administration, much concerned about religious prob-

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lems, Kusho Tsechu is also responsible for the organization of the Lama Desh Darśan Seminar.

Kathmandu, long an important pilgrimage centre for the Himalayan Buddhists, is now fast becoming a centre of spiritual life. Here several monasteries have been built, and the Western world's growing interest in Buddhist philosophy has contributed to this development.

The inhabitants of northern Nepal enjoy a number of advantages—cyclical renewal, greater diffusion of sacred texts due to modern methods of reproduction that have replaced the woodcuts of long ago, congregations of the clergy that facilitate initiation into complex rites, travel of scholars from one centre to another (India, Sikkim and Bhutan play an important role in the transmission of knowledge).

It is to be hoped that all these efforts will have repercussions on the conservation of the cultural heritage.

It is through the awareness of the authorities on the one hand, and by simple conservation operations on the other, that a well-balanced programme can be carried out, one in the same spirit as that of the Kathmandu Valley Master Plan, and unique in its value of universality.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Model questionnaire for making an inventory of a building

Hereunder is a model of a questionnaire for obtaining a complete description of a building.

The building's present condition and appropriate repair recommendations are given in parallel columns. (The advice given should be tested before beginning the work.) Although this questionnaire was developed for northern Nepalese monuments, it could be useful for similar work in other parts of the world.

Photographic and topographical summaries are, of course, essential.

The form of the questionnaire should be scrupulously observed, as the document may be used not only by technicians but also by research workers for the purpose of comparative studies.

The collecting of historical documents, written and oral archives, is particularly important. In addition to the inscriptions often found in the entrance porch or near the altar (construction or restoration dates, list of donors, names of monks in charge), a study should also be made of: (*a*) publications such as biographies of lamas, descriptions of pilgrimages or sacred places, documents of local history; (*b*) documents containing lists of former members of the clergy, arranged in chronological order (these lists are also included in the prayer *gSol-deb*); (*c*) accounts kept by the secretary of the village assembly and village archives. Interviews with the craftsmen and foremen who are thoroughly acquainted with the materials used would be a great asset.

These data will be valuable not only for immediate preservation of the monuments but also for the establishment of a general inventory of religious culture in northern Nepal.

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Model for a description

Introduction:
Object of the description.
General information, ecological data (the landscape), ways of life of the inhabitants, elements of local history.
Methods of construction and description of the building methods employed in the cultural area, main problems and defects.

Detailed description of building complexes: each building should be studied separately and adequate numbering given to each ensemble.
(A numbering with reference to a national system should be adopted; it might follow the division into districts and the Panchayat.)

1.00 Definition and type.
- 1.01 Localization, environment, altitude, gradient, distance between human settlements.
- 1.02 Description of the building: dimensions, plan, utilization, style.

2.00 Cultural elements.
- 2.01 History, foundation of the building in relation to the social and religious history of the region, successive stages in the building's existence.
- 2.02 Religious and cultural aspects, religious orders (which may determine the style of iconographical representation).
- 2.03 Type of architecture.

3.00 Construction. Foundations and main walls.
- 3.01 Detailed description of walls in a precise direction (clockwise).
- 3.02 Roof.
- 3.03 External elements, secondary work.
- 3.03.1 Doors.
- 3.03.2 Windows.
- 3.03.3 Pillars and lintels.
- 3.04 Upper storeys.
- 3.05 Internal elements.
- 3.05.1 Walls.
- 3.05.2 Pillars.
- 3.05.3 Beams.
- 3.05.4 Flooring.

Present state of conservation and recommendations regarding repairs and maintenance.

4.00 Structure.
- 4.01 Foundations and walls.

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4.02 Inner structure, starting from the ground floor.
4.03 Condition of the roof structure.

5.00 Technology.
5.01 Rising damp in walls.
5.02 Wall coverings.
5.03 Ground floor.
5.04 Upper floors and ceiling.
5.05 Roofing.

6.00 In the case of a group of buildings, other buildings such as a chapel with a prayer-wheel, communal kitchen, caretaker's quarters, chörten.

7.00 Estimate of costs.

8.00 Projects of the local responsible authorities.

PRESENT STATE OF CONSERVATION	REPAIR RECOMMENDATIONS
4.00 *Structure* 4.01 *Foundations and walls:* Hardly a single wall in any of the religious buildings has not moved at some time or another. Movement is inevitable in old buildings, whether due to materials which would be considered weak by modern standards, to the interaction of structure and building or through ageing. In any case, structural movements are only of significance in the following circumstances: a. Where movement is still 'alive'. b. If initial movements have caused significant structural weakness. c. Where structural cracks or widened joints have allowed rain or frost to penetrate or caused further weakening. In Nepal, most of the structural weaknesses in buildings have been caused by earthquakes; these movements are and will always be a constant threat to the buildings.	If there are signs of serious movement in the building, it must first be ascertained whether this movement is still alive. The crack is bridged with a small tell-tale, a thin strip of glass that is firmly bedded in cement on either side of the crack. If the glass breaks it shows there is movement, and usually close examination can tell in which direction. Depending on how serious the crack is, its repair consists in filling the opening either with well-matched stonework or by the insertion of a reinforced-concrete bonder (maximum dimensions: $100 \times 25 \times 25$ cm) cast *in situ*. Where there is failure at roof level, a ring beam in stone bedded in a cement mortar can be used in cases that are not serious or, where the walls are very unstable, a reinforced-concrete beam should be inserted. The reinforcement should be a thick-gauged mesh; the use of steel bars should be avoided.

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Present state of conservation	Repair recommendations
4.02 *Inner structure* The timbers used are nearly always oversized and put in place when 'green' so that they warp and look unstable. Occasionally the spans are excessive for the beam sections. The main defects are the result of roofing in bad condition, causing wet rot in the timbers.	First, the wood should be left to dry out for some time before use. Normally, the inner structure should be well connected to the supporting walls. If this is not so, the two elements should be joined together by bolting steel anchors onto the beam ends and setting them in a concrete padstone.
4.03 *Roof structure* The inner structures are always well built, but roofing is often of very low standard and constructed of unhewn timber; the purlins are too spaced out. The more complicated roof structures, entailing hipped and tiered roofs, are badly made. Many roofs have simply been adapted to accommodate new materials: the pitch is insufficient and the roof has become structurally unstable.	The traditional roof structures are sufficiently strong to support a simple covering. Their life expectancy can be prolonged by chemical treatment. Some of the newer roof designs need either strengthening or altering. In many cases a carefully designed and constructed timber truss would save timber and simplify building construction. These elements are not generally visible; if a major building programme is envisaged in a given region, as most of the buildings follow a standard module based on available timber sizes, it would be advisable to make standard mass-produced trusses.
5.00 *Technology* 5.01 *Rising damp in walls* Old buildings are nearly always susceptible to rising damp because, unlike modern buildings, they have no damp-proof course built into the walls. Wall-base damp may occur from the following causes: a. Ground damp rising within the thickness of the walls through capillary attraction. b. Saturation from rainwater splash. c. Water penetration caused by external ground levels being higher than internal floor levels. Once rainwater has infiltrated the wall base, it can often rise to remarkably	There are nowadays many sophisticated methods of combatting rising damp, such as silicone injection or insertion of mechanical damp-proof membranes and high capillary tubes, but none of these is really suitable for the type of material used in the construction of Nepalese buildings since most of the moisture is borne by bedding material, the mud mortar between the almost non-porous stones used in the wall construction. If the wall bases were properly protected against rainwater, the problem would easily be solved. The following are some feasible alternatives: a. The laying of porous land drains in a gravel-filled trench along the external walls to collect and control

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PRESENT STATE OF CONSERVATION	REPAIR RECOMMENDATIONS

high levels through capillary movement.
Rising damp is not of itself necessarily dangerous but it is sufficient to cause the disintegration of the basic structure. It is of significance however in the following cases:

a. When rising damp carries with it natural earth salts in solution which in recrystallizing just below the internal plasterwork can cause irreparable damage to the murals.
b. When timber is in contact with damp surfaces, particularly when unventilated, favourable conditions are created for dry or wet rot and possible woodworm attack. Once initiated in a damp area, true dry rot can then spread to the whole wooden structure.

ground water. The gravel topping must always be left clear of vegetation and rubbish to allow continuous evaporation.
b. Correct and careful tabling of the ground around the wall base to ensure that all the rainwater is directed immediately away from the wall. The plinths around the buildings should be correctly maintained and kept clear of any growth, as this attracts moisture and prevents the wall from drying out.

The murals painted on a mud-based plaster are those most susceptible to damage. Normally the paintings start above the limit of rising damp but often the lower parts of the murals are damaged by moisture drawn up by capillary attraction. It is recommended that in such cases the lower section of plaster be removed up to where the murals begin. The walling beneath should be allowed to dry out before it is replastered and a gap of 3 cm should be left between the old and new plaster to prevent the passage of moisture.

5.02 *Wall coverings*

5.03 *Ground floor*
5.04 *Upper floors and ceiling*

In most cases where both walls and floors are of timber, they are liable to fungal attack. The common factor encouraging timber defects is a damp and unventilated environment.
The characteristics of the various defects are as follows.

Fungal decay

True dry rot (Merilius lachrimans). This is the greatest danger for all timber.
Fungus occurs and grows under the following conditions:

Dry rot. The presence of dry rot must always be fully investigated and treated as a matter of the greatest urgency.
In suspect areas, the structure must be fully opened up at the point where conditions are right for an outbreak, and all paths of water travel, all timbers within the area, very carefully examined. If an attack is found, each line of its spread must be fully traced to its farthest extent and beyond. All affected timber must be scrupulously removed and burned, and retained timber around the perimeter of the attack, together with walling and finishes, must be fully sterilized with a suitable fungicide. Thick walls or large timbers sometimes need to be drilled to impregnate them.

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PRESENT STATE OF CONSERVATION	REPAIR RECOMMENDATIONS
a. Lack of ventilation b. Relatively warm conditions (an ambient temperature of between 20° and 30° C). c. A moderate moisture content (20 per cent to 25 per cent). In such cases,the spores of the fungus can germinate and reproduce, even travelling in search of suitable timbers. In well-established attacks, the mushrooms develop and ripen to produce millions of spores. The result of dry rot is total destruction of all timber in the structure and the infection of adjacent building materials in which the fungus may have laid dormant for several years ready to be re-actived by favourable conditions for further attack.	In restoration treatment, the use of timber must be reduced to a minimum, and any wood used needs to undergo preventive treatment. Most important is that the conditions causing the outbreak must be rectified; the cause of the damp conditions identified and stopped, and ventilation introduced wherever possible.
Wet rot. There are many differing species of wet rot related to differing circumstances of light, humidity, ventilation and types of material. However, all their characteristics are basically similar. Wet rot is normally found in the following places: a. In the ends of timbers built into wet walls, especially at ground level, in floors and pillars which are in contact with the earth. b. In areas of localized roof leaks. This type of fungal attack occurs under high humidity conditions (50 per cent to 60 per cent moisture content), in fact, in conditions that are too wet for dry rot; and it is of itself far less dangerous; it is much less destructive and less likely to spread. Wet rot can cause weakness in structural timbers but its real significance is that it indicates defective conditions which could indeed lead to dry rot.	*Wet rot*. The treatment of wet rot is relatively simple: removal of weakened timbers and their repair or replacement and preventive treatment with fungicide. A careful check must be made that dry rot has not set in. The source of dampness must be traced and stopped, and extra ventilation is again most desirable where possible.
Woodworm This type of attack is extremely rare.	The treatment against woodworm is similar to that used against fungal attack, and the chemical used is usually a fungicide combined with an insecticide. The timbers have first to be cleaned and then thoroughly treated with the chemical.

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5.05 *Roofing:*

A major problem besetting all buildings in northern Nepal is the poor condition of their roof coverings. Very few buildings were reported to have a watertight roof and those that did probably had had their roofs renewed recently with corrugated iron sheeting. It is true that this type of roof keeps the building dry but it is very detrimental to the local environment.

There is basically one traditional roof covering in the region, south of the Himalayas, which we know as *shingles* (panglep). These are wooden roof tiles of varying sizes that are riven from fir trees (*Tsuga dumosa*). The shingles are split off the tree trunk across the grain into widths of about 15 cm and lengths of about 1 metre (occasionally, on some of the older and cruder buildings, they can be longer). The shingles usually rest on battens spanning the rafters and were originally held down by stones. The shingles usually warp and as a result it is necessary to turn each tile after the first year from head to tail. This type of roof often leaks.
In regions where the roofs are terraced infiltrations may occur at the point where the supporting wall is covered by the roof structure. The wall is usually topped by a parapet on which a stock of firewood is kept. If the rainwater and melted snow do not run away freely, infiltrations occur.

Modern techniques should be used to lay down traditional roofs to give them longer life-expectancy than at present. It will be essential to persuade the local people to revert to them rather than use the corrugated iron sheeting which typifies 'development and progress'. This can be achieved by treating the shingles in the following way.

The shingles should be chemically treated against fungal and woodworm degradation, then dipped in silicone solution to prevent water penetration. They should then be laid on battens and held in position by stones.
Possibly after a year or so, if the shingles curl, they should be turned head to tail and then fixed by nailing, if possible with non-ferrous nails. If the roof covering is of corrugated iron, it can form a base over which the roof can be battened and counter battened over the sheeting with shingles.

At regular intervals the roof should be checked to make sure that it is watertight and the water runs out of the waterspouts.
At present the roof is covered with a thick layer of clay over which a plaster sheet is spread, overlapping the walls and held in place by a further thin layer of clay. This technique has not been tried and tested and there is a risk of blocking the ventilation. This material must be laid very carefully to avoid any rents.

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Appendix 2. Inventory index card for movable objects in temples, chapels and private houses

Paintings

Paintings on canvas (banners: *thangka*).
For each painting:
- Overall dimensions, dimensions of the painting itself
- Iconographical material (complete data and photographs of individual details)
- Inscriptions
- State of preservation
- Place of deposit

Other paintings

Statuary

For each object:
- Material (clay, bronze, copper)
- Dimensions (photograph—full-face, profile)
- Iconographical data
- Information concerning working methods
- State of preservation

Ritual objects

For each object:
- Material
- Dimensions
- Place of production
- State of preservation

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Musical instruments used in religious ceremonies

Material
Dimensions

Books

For each volume or series of works:
Title (photograph of title page and colophon)
Woodcut or manuscript
Dimensions, number of pages
State of preservation

Engraved woodwork (works or protective charms)

For each object:
Description (photograph)
Dimensions

Masks for religious dances

For each object:
Material
State of preservation

Craftsmen specialized in producing or repairing religious objects

Name
Place of residence
Level of proficiency

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The Sherpas have been the subject of a series of studies and one must quote first the work of C. von Fürer Haimendorf, *The Sherpas of Nepal.* A series of dissertations contributes to the knowledge of their way of life and mentality. In the present field of interest, the best document is D. Snellgrove, *Buddhist Himalaya,* which gives a description of the Solu-Khumbu religious practices and the attitudes towards religion since 1955. Serving as a guidebook, it gave us a possibility of comparison with present practices, particularly in Chiwong Gompa, which is described in detail. Also of importance is the description of two monastic communities by C. von Fürer Haimendorf and B. H. Aziz in *Kailash,* Vol. IV, No. 2.

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WORKS IN THE TIBETAN LANGUAGE

The temples and monasteries possess religious works, manuscripts, woodcuts, the Buddhist Canon and commentaries, texts of the daily ritual, biographies of lamas, historical data concerning temples and pilgrimage places, and medical and soothsaying works, which are kept either in the assembly halls or in specially appointed rooms.

In the past twenty years or so two diametrically opposed activities have been under way: on the one hand, unscrupulous members of the clergy and laymen have been selling these works (pages of which are to be found in Kathmandu or Namche Bazar markets), and thus destroying part of an irreplaceable cultural heritage of manuscripts; on the other hand, the clergy has had the more important works reprinted either in India or in Sikkim.

The Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., United States of America, has a continuing programme for the acquisition of Tibetan works, many of them from Nepal, which are regularly listed in its Accession Lists.

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